

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Autumn
(April–June) 1997, no 64
\$7.50* NZ \$9.50 (incl GST)

**COMPREHENSIVE
GEAR SURVEYS:**

WALKING BOOTS

**LIGHTWEIGHT
BINOCULARS**

TRACK NOTES:

**MT KOSCIUSKO
AREA—EASIER
WALKING**

**WALKING NEAR
CANBERRA**

**CLASSIC
NSW WALKS
GUIDEBOOK INSIDE**

BUSHWALKING:

**NAVIGATION
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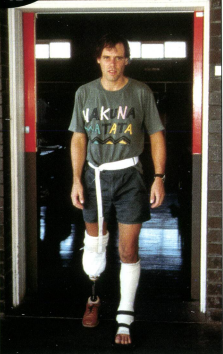


Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Established 1981

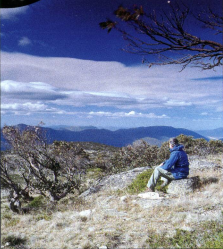
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A Stone Healing

David Wagland, survivor extraordinaire, by *Quentin Chester*

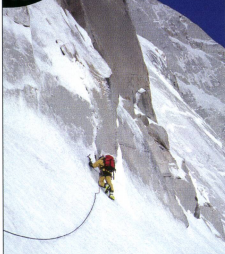
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ALLIANCE
Founding Member

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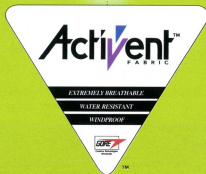
WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover It's just as well there's a track! Greg Tossell on the Arthur Plains, Southwest Tasmania. *Matthew Newman*

* Maximum Australian recommended retail price only

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Unnatural resources

The Victorian Government turns feral in National Parks

There can't be many Victorians above the age of six who are unaware that the government plans to 'develop' Wilsons Promontory, one of Australia's most spectacular and popular National Parks. They will also know that such plans have stirred up an almost unprecedented level of opposition for an environmental issue. Middle Victorians of all age groups have spoken out in their thousands to make it clear that this time the government—which has received more than 3230 submissions from the public—has gone too far. Indeed, such was the extent and substance of the protest that the government was forced to announce a partial back-flip 'on financial grounds': the cancellation of plans for a proposed 150-bed, four-star, licensed hotel—the plans refer to it as a 'lodge'—at Norman Bay.

While this is undoubtedly a major victory for the conservation movement (and particularly for the Victorian National Parks Association, which is orchestrating the campaign to 'save the Prom'), it is by no means the end of the matter. Indeed, the preposterous hotel proposal may well have been an ambit claim by the government, to be 'sacrificed' at the appropriate moment to enable it to proceed unhindered with its real development agenda for the National Park.

The remaining proposals are at least as unpalatable. They include plans for private lodges, huts and camp-sites throughout the National Park and new walking tracks—one to be cut through seven kilometres of virgin bush to Waterloo Bay! And following the government's announcement about the demise of the 150-bed hotel it is beginning to make noises about developing additional accommodation and investigating a wider range of food services above what was canvassed in the draft management plans for the area.

The VNPA and others have expressed concerns for all Victorian National Parks following the December announcement of the abolition of the National Parks Service and its replacement by 'Parks Victoria'. The VNPA is particularly critical of the new corporate approach of Parks Victoria and its identical management structure to Melbourne Parks & Waterways, which does not have the protection of natural values in

parks as its primary objective. In its preoccupation with the concept that everything should 'pay for itself', the government has seen to it that parks are promoted to the hilt and that park activities once run by park rangers are now 'outsourced' to commercial operators.

'If the Government continues in the manner it has in 1996, Victoria's park system...will be on the road to ruin', the VNPA concludes.

The Victorian Government's view that National Parks are 'natural resources' to be commercially exploited to their maximum regardless of the possible long-term effects of such a policy is evidenced by its plans for vast and inappropriate tourist infrastructures at two other coastal attractions—the seal colony at the Nobbies on Phillip Island and the Twelve Apostles near Port Campbell in the State's southwest. Plans for the Nobbies include new buildings, walkways and possibly even an 'underwater viewing tower'. This brings to mind the over-development of Phillip Island's 'penguin parade'. The nightly viewing of the penguins returning to their rookery is being promoted as a tourist attraction to such an extent that overseas visitors are likely to be disappointed with the experience. Another example was the government's proposal (now scrapped) to allow sandstone mining in the Grampians National Park for the renovation of the State's Parliament House. Nor have fragile alpine areas escaped the relentless drive for the dollar regardless of the true cost. Plans have been announced for the doubling of the facilities of the Mt Hotham alpine resort; a golf course and an airfield are to be built where currently there are stands of snow gums. Proposals for the development of Mt Stirling for downhill skiing have now been rejected.

The present Victorian Government seems unshakable in its determination to sacrifice the environment in order to serve commercial interests—on a scale possibly unprecedented in the often shameful annals of Australian environmental history.

The results are a depressing litany, but not a hopeless one. The Wilson Promontory hotel experience and the Mt Stirling decision show what can happen if enough people speak out loudly and persistently. Who knows? One day the Victorian Government's reversal on the Prom hotel issue may be seen as a turning point. It's up to each one of us to help to make it so.

WILD THINGS

One person who has been helping to 'make it so' is VNPA Director Doug Humann, who bears much of the load of the present, ongoing campaign for Victorian National Parks, particularly for Wilsons Prom. It gives me great pleasure to announce that he is the winner of the second *Wild Environmentalist of the Year Award* of \$1000.



Wild Environmentalist of the Year, Doug Humann. Humann collection

It is also my pleasure to announce that Karen Hall has succeeded Graeme Owers (who has gone overseas) at Wild Publications. A bushwalker who has done some rockclimbing, Karen is responsible for mailing and other support duties.

With this issue the cover price of *Wild* has been raised to \$7.50, the first increase since issue 56. In that time the average size of *Wild* has increased from 123 to 133 pages and the percentage of advertising in the magazine has been reduced. ☹

Chris Baxter

Environmental impact statement

Wild is printed on Monza paper, which is made of 35 per cent pre-consumer waste and 15 per cent post-consumer waste that has been recycled and oxygen bleached. The cover has a water-based varnish (not an environmentally detrimental UV or plastic finish). We recycle the film used in the printing process. Wild staff run an environmentally aware office. Waste paper is recycled, printer ribbons are re-inked, waste is kept to an absolute minimum; even tea bags are reused until they no longer give colour to water. We invite your comments and recommendations; please contact the Managing Editor.



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Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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Publisher Wild Publications Pty Ltd

ACN 006 748 938

Printing York Press

Colour reproduction Scanagraphix Pty Ltd

Distribution Gordon and Gotch Limited

Subscription rates are currently \$29.95 for one year (four issues), \$52.00 for two years, or \$75.00 for three years, by surface mail to addresses in Australia. Add \$9.00 for each four issues to overseas addresses.

When moving, advise us immediately of your new and old addresses to avoid lost or delayed copies. Please also send your address sheet received with a copy of Wild.

Advertising rates are available on request.

Copy deadlines (advertising and editorial):

8 October (summer issue), 15 January (autumn),

15 April (spring), 15 July (spring).

See below for publication dates.

Contributions, preferably well illustrated with slides, are welcome. *Guidelines for Contributors* are available on receipt of a stamped, addressed envelope. Whenever possible, written submissions should be supplied on a three and a half-inch floppy disk in either IBM or Apple format. Please specify which format, program and version number. Hard copy should also be supplied. If not on disk, submissions should be typed, double spaced, on one side of sheets of A4 paper. Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage. Names and addresses should be written on disks, manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, no responsibility is accepted for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

Editorial, advertising, subscription, distribution and general correspondence to:

Wild Publications Pty Ltd,

PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181, Australia.

Phone (03) 9826 8482

Fax (03) 9826 3787

Wild is published quarterly in the middle of the month before cover date (cover dates: January–March, April–June, July–September, October–December) by Wild Publications Pty Ltd. The Wild logo (ISSN 1030-4690) is registered as a trade mark, and the use of the name is prohibited. All material copyright reserved 1997 Wild Publications Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without first obtaining the written consent of the publisher. Wild attempts to verify advertising, track notes, route descriptions, maps and other information, but cannot be held responsible for erroneous, incomplete or misleading material.

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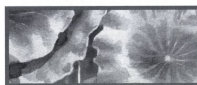
Overseas, we offer trips from the Canadian Arctic islands to the mountains of Patagonia. Closer to home, we offer some of the best wilderness bushwalking in the world: Kakadu and the Top End of the NT, central Australia, the Kimberley and Pilbara regions in WA. What makes them so good? Water, campsites and weather.

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Note. January's cyclones have provided the water that will make 1997 an especially good year for our June–July Pilbara expedition.



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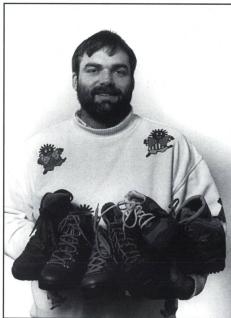
He's always looking for the perfect fit.

Now, you may be no Cinderella but if you prefer bushwalking to ballroom dancing you should head out to Ajays Snow Country Sports.

Phill, Robbie and the team can provide virtually anyone with bushwalking boots that really fit. Our knowledge of leather and last is legendary. This, combined with our unique skills in fitting customised moulded foot-beds adds up to a service you won't get anywhere else in Melbourne.

The team at Ajays starts off by listening to what you have to say. If you've had problems with boots before, we like to check out your old boots. We will discuss with you what sort of walking you intend to do and advise you on the best choice of boot for the terrain.

The structure and shape of your feet is carefully measured with a sizing gauge, (remember them?) and then we hunt through our range of no less than 500 pairs until we find the perfect boot for you. There's no store in Melbourne with a bigger selection. The fit can be further fine-tuned by having foot-beds individually moulded to your feet.



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With service like this you'd naturally expect Ajays to stay open longer hours — and we do. We're open in summer from 9 am to 6 pm Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 9 pm Friday and 9 am to 2 pm Saturday, and even longer hours for skiers in the winter.

Just now we are clearing out a number of discontinued lines so there are some unbeatable bargains to be snapped up. And we give our "Boot Fit Guarantee" on every boot we sell, including remaindered stock.

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Ludicrous

Victoria's Alpine Resorts Commission draws yet more fire



Having read [your letter] in *Wild* no 63 (Wildfire, page 7, see also Green Pages, page 21) we wish to report on what we found when we were cross-country skiing on Friday 27 September 1996.

We skied from Falls Creek and along Heathy Spur heading towards Mt Nelse and beyond. There had been fresh snow all the previous day and there were no tracks, ski or vehicle. On our return along Heathy Spur at about 4.30 pm we couldn't help but notice the mess made by snowmobiles. There were tracks everywhere, some describing circles of varying diameters. There appeared to have been at least two vehicles but there may have been more. The tracks appeared to have been made for fun as the visibility was perfect, with a cloudless blue sky, as it had been all day. Skiing along Heathy Spur was made very difficult owing to the number of tracks and the icing up as the evening drew nearer. Whether the high area of Heathy Spur is 'entirely within Alpine Resorts' or not, the mess made by the snowmobiles was inexcusable.

Also that day we were amazed at the inefficiency of the trail-grooming procedure. As we set out towards Heathy Spur the trail groomer had obviously gone ahead of us. Just after we had crossed the dam wall we met four skidoos heading towards Falls Creek. Between them they totally destroyed the groomed trail. About five minutes later we met the trail groomer returning from Watchbed Creek regrooming the trail. A few minutes later a huge Alpine Resorts Commission double-tracked vehicle came from Watchbed Creek direction and again totally destroyed the groomed trail.

It does seem ludicrous that trail fees should be charged outside the resort area and it is even more ludicrous that the groomed trails should be destroyed almost as soon as they are made.

We hope this information will enable you to be more sensitive in the development of a rational management plan for this beautiful area.

Ian and Beth Smith
Eltham, Vic

This is a copy of a letter sent to Peter Howarth, Chief Executive Officer of the ARC. Editor

● It happens

Your subtitle to my story 'On Foot in the Fitzgerald' (*Wild* no 62)—'Walking Western



Australia's wild west coast—is a fine example of creative alliteration, but is factually incorrect. As the map on page 66 shows, the Fitzgerald is on the south coast of WA, not the west—wild, certainly, but not west by any compass I know.

Further, two advertisements in the same issue demand comment: First, the 'Shit Happens!' header on the SweetWater material inside the back cover may be eye-catching, and in many cases may be appropriate to thoughts of gathering drinking-water in the wild, but I feel your fine magazine lowers itself in many eyes by running this cheap and crude copy. I question its necessity. And I do not put any store by 'editorial bravado'—you certainly don't need it.

Secondly, the One Planet advertisement on page 75, depicting two mountain bikers pedalling a narrow, unformed track leading quite steeply uphill, worries me. Experience both here and overseas shows that mountain-bike use of tracks not specifically constructed to withstand their usage can create rapid and dramatic deterioration of the track surface, generally through the action of running water flowing down wheel ruts and lines of travel. This raises a broader issue—that of recognising and integrating the rapidly booming sport of

mountain biking into our cherished rucksack sports world...

Many thanks for the otherwise fine job you did with 'On Foot in the Fitzgerald'.

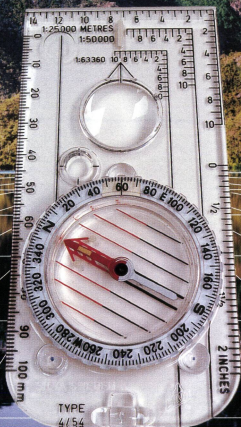
Jesse Brampton
Hamilton Hill, WA

● Bringing the book to boot

Quentin Chester (*The Wild Life*, *Wild* no 56) should be very pleased with himself. He has opened the lid on a remarkable debate and exposed some unusual opinions, none more so than those of Klaus Hueneker (*Wildfire*, *Wild* no 61). I am unable to say what prompted Hueneker's shallow and unnecessary retort, but I guess that I should feel almost honoured that he should choose to level the charge of 'cultural cringe' at me, rather than at Chester. After all, it was Chester who raised the whole issue in the first place! However, since it seems I am to be the villain of the piece, I am more than happy to accept Hueneker's challenge and divulge just a small portion of what I have been reading in an attempt to prove myself wrong: Charles Barrett, *An Australian Wildflower Book*, 1942; *Wanderers Rest*, 1946; CEW Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 1910; George Farwell, *The Outside Track*, 1951; Farwell Country, 1977; Hedley Finlayson, *The Red*

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QUEENSLAND • K2 Base Camp

VICTORIA • Adventure & Climbing Equipment
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**EXTREME
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AUSTRALIA**

Centre, 1935; William Hatfield, *I Find Australia*, 1943; Jack Hyett, *A Bushman's Year*, 1959; Donald Macdonald, *Gum Boughs and Wattle Bloom*, 1887, *The Brooks of Morning*, 1933; Crosbie Morrison, *Along the Track*, 1961; CP Mountford, *Brown Men and Red Sand*, 1950; and Bernard O'Reilly, *Cullenbenbong*, 1944, *Green Mountains*, 1940.

I shall try to lay my hands on *Flying Fox and Drifting Sand* and the Elyne Mitchell book to see whether I've missed something. As for *Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist*, Wheelwright was Australia's first and worst 'hook and bullet' writer and how Hueneke can describe his tedious descriptions of trophy hunting as 'nature writing' is beyond me. And, however much I like it, I can't include *Seven Rivers* because Douglas Stewart was a New Zealander—not an insurmountable hurdle—and more than half of the book is not about Australia, but about New Zealand.

A great many of the titles listed here are hard to come by. However, for those who are interested, I can recommend two anthologies that give the broad flavour of Australian 'writing about nature': *Land of Wonder—The Best Australian Nature Writing* (edited by AH Chisholm, Angus and Robertson, 1964) and *Gone Bush* (edited by Roger McDonald, Bantam, 1990). Then read a few good anthologies of North American and British 'nature writing'... The differences in style, depth and imagination between Australian 'writing about nature' and American and English 'nature writing' will, I think, become all too clear.

The differences are twofold. First, in good nature writing there is a clear recognition that in addition to the four-dimensional physical topography there is a fifth dimension which involves the spiritual landscape, the country of the mind, the 'dreamscape' that also needs exploring. Secondly, and perhaps more important than anything, most of those represented in the overseas anthologies are quite simply very good non-fiction writers. They are masters of their craft. The best nature writing combines an eye for detail in the natural world, places little stress on technique, prowess and performance in wild and natural places, draws together as many threads as possible or as necessary to limn a natural landscape with the special and ultimate aim of establishing an intimacy and reverence for natural places and processes. The word that most closely describes the approach is 'respect'—respect for the readers in placing before them a unique moment, respect for the landscape by acknowledging the mystery and variety of wild places and the life forms that make up the biodiversity and, finally, respect for the language. As Sandra Bardwell wrote in her review of Klaus Hueneke's book *Kiandra to Kosciuszko* in 1989: 'Accounts of "what we ate and where we went" fall short.'

Instead of trying to define 'nature writing', Quentin Chester chose instead—wisely, I think—to nominate writers/books that fitted into his idea of 'good' nature

writing', challenging his readers to go out and find the books and decide for themselves whether Blay or Chester—or Browncombe, for that matter—measure up. And, happily, I see in his reply to Hueneke that he has stuck to his guns and maintains his position that the prose writing exploring the spiritual dimensions of natural Australia, to quote Henry Kendall, 'remains unwritten yet'. And, needless to say, I agree...

Ross Browncombe
Carlingford, NSW

● Stirring

I wait anxiously for the months to pass and for another issue of *Wild* to arrive. Issue no 63 arrived and I was not disappointed. Amongst all the excellent articles, that of Gregor Jordan stood out. Once in a while something you read just takes your breath away. The powerful imagery created by Gregor's departure from Nepal as he contemplated the relative height of the plane and the Goddess Mother of the Snows and then wove into this scene the link between the sea shells on the beach in Australia and those found in the Himalayas was a *tour de force*. His concluding words: 'Soon I would be back at the beach, holding the sea shells whose ancient cousins protruded from blizzard-lashed mountain summits at the edge of the atmosphere, falling behind as my plane sped into the descending night' were the most powerful and stirring image I have encountered for a very long time.

Thank you, Gregor, I hope we hear from you again soon. Thank you, *Wild*, for consciously promoting writing excellence in your publication...

Kel Booth
Theodore, ACT

● Size matters

I refer to Paul Mooney's letter in *Wild* no 63. I am an active bushwalking club member and frequent trip leader for two of Sydney's larger clubs. It is likely to be the larger east-coast bushwalking clubs that have sufficient numbers to be able to attract the large group sizes that concern Mr Mooney.

Mr Mooney's letter was timely as debate has quite recently started in some Sydney clubs about his concerns. A number of club members, myself included, have expressed concern about the practice of some club trip leaders taking what Mr Mooney correctly describes as 'excessively large groups into the bush'.

I endorse Mr Mooney's sentiments. However, I would like to assure him, and readers of this excellent magazine, that this issue is under serious consideration by some larger clubs...

Maurice Smith
Bexley, NSW

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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Bush closures?

High Court to decide

● Mush!

An Australian is one of two adventurers who will attempt the first-ever circumnavigation of Greenland—the world's largest island—beginning in May this year.

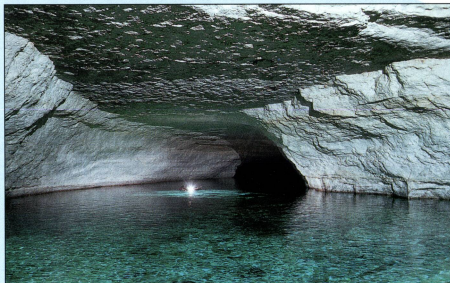
John Hoelscher and his American partner Lonnie Dupre intend to make the 7500 kilometre journey using the traditional polar transportation methods of dog sledge and sea kayak. Both men are experienced 'mushers', Hoelscher having cared for working huskies at Australia's Mawson

Station in Antarctica until the dogs' removal from the continent in 1992. (One or two of the Mawson huskies—which were given homes in North America—will take part in the expedition.)

The journey will begin at Paamiut on Greenland's south-west coast on 15 May and is expected to be completed by August 1998. The team hopes to use a laptop computer and satellite communication system to post regular updates of its progress, including digital images, on two Internet web sites.

The gruelling yet lightweight nature of the expedition brings to mind the

high court considers land manager liability



It would now seem to be a fact of life that public land around Australia is being managed more 'defensively' due to fear of litigation at the hands of anyone injured on it. This has inevitably led to restrictions on recreational access. (See 'Controversial cave closure', page 17)

In 1993 the High Court decided *Nagle v. Rottneest Island Authority*. A young man became quadriplegic after diving head first on to a submerged rock ledge. He successfully sued the authority, arguing that it had actively promoted the area for swimming but had failed to warn of the hidden danger. Providing amenities put the authority under a duty to guard against the risk in question.

That case was interpreted by some as requiring all land managers to erect warning signs at the site of every conceivable danger—large or small. Managers responded with policies designed to minimise their supposed legal exposure. Much has been written about this in *Wild*. (See, for example, *Wild Information* in issue 60.)

Another case has now emerged—*Romeo v. Conservation Commission*—the outcome of which will have a profound impact on the

Weebubbe Cave, Nullarbor Plain, Western Australia. Due to fear of litigation, the WA Government plans to ban all access to the cave. Both photos Stephen Buntin

management and use of public land in Australia well into the 21st century. In fact this case is the most important for decades since it is concerned with ordinary dangers connected with activities which the land manager did nothing to encourage directly.

A partially intoxicated teenage girl fell over a small cliff in a Darwin reserve one night. The commission had installed a low rail fence some distance from the cliff but the girl and her friends ignored the barrier. She had been to the reserve before and knew the cliff was there but (inexplicably) just wandered over the edge. The trial judge said that the danger was both apparent and known. Nothing the commission did increased the risk and the accident could easily have been avoided by the girl taking ordinary care for her own safety.

The appeal court agreed (albeit for slightly different reasons) and the girl sought special

leave to appeal from the High Court.

She argued she had not been given a fair trial because the judge concentrated on the *nature* of the danger, rather than on whether the risk was *foreseeable*. Since 1987 the law in Australia has been that category of danger does not determine the issue—it is merely one of the factors to be weighed in deciding whether the risk was reasonably foreseeable.

All courts will be bound by what the High Court says when it decides the appeal (sometime in 1997). Should it hold that land managers owe recreational users a duty actively to protect them against *all* foreseeable risks that are not far-fetched, however arising and whatever their nature, recreational access to public land in Australia will inevitably suffer. It would then take special legislation to retrieve the situation by protecting managers from liability.

The High Court is more likely to steer some middle course between land managers being made virtual insurers against all accidents on the one hand, and recreational users of public land bearing all the risks themselves on the other.

But precisely where the balance will be struck is a matter for conjecture. Get out the crystal ball. There are strong legal and policy arguments for limiting land manager liability but the gradual trend of the common law has been to impose greater responsibility on occupiers of land generally. A sensible result would be to limit land manager exposure to operational decisions affecting recreational risks which are neither obvious to the observer nor inherent in the activity.

Whatever the outcome of the case *Romeo v. Conservation Commission*, Australia needs to consider legislative measures as a way of preserving recreational access to public land by taking the heat off land managers. This solution to the problem operates effectively in the USA.

Gordon Bryslard

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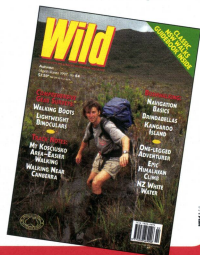
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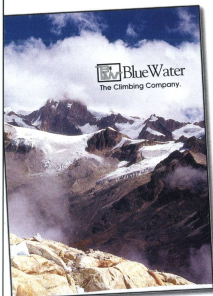
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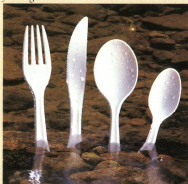


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NEW SOUTH WALES

● Geehi's 40 years

The Geehi Bushwalking Club based in the Snowy Mountains is celebrating 40 years of activity this year. Formed by members of the Snowy Mountains Scheme construction workforce, the club pioneered and marked many of the well-known walking tracks in the area now known as Kosciusko National Park.

The club's anniversary programme will include nostalgic walks and camps, a dinner and a photographic exhibition. Many of these activities will be suitable for participation by the early members of the club. A mailing list of previous members and other interested people is being prepared and those on the list will be provided with details of the programme. For further information, phone (064) 52 2859 or write to PO Box 344, Cooma North, NSW 2630.

VICTORIA

● Stop, thief!

The December 1996 issue of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs newsletter *VicWalk News* reports that eight vehicles parked at the Mountain Creek camping area—which serves as the start of many bushwalking excursions to the popular Mt Bogong region—were broken into on the weekend of 19–20 August last year. Among items stolen were rucksacks, clothing and cash. Walkers using remote or popular bush parking bays are reminded to lock their vehicles and remove or hide valuables before heading off.

TASMANIA

● New National Park

Last November the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service incorporated 12 parcels of land totalling 1345 hectares into the new Mole Creek Karst National Park. The park is Australia's first Karst National Park and includes such important caves as King Solomons, Marakoopa, Croesus, Baldocks, Wet Cave, Westmoreland Falls, Sensation Gorge and the famous and beautiful Kubla Khan. Most of the land included in the new park was formerly State Reserve under the management of the PWS but without a consistent management plan or the legal protection National Park status provides.

Stephen Bunton

● Something old, something new

Australia's newest caving club is also its oldest. Confused? The answer to the riddle is found in the amalgamation of Hobart's three caving organisations last December to form the Southern Tasmanian Cavers. The STC began by celebrating the 50th anniversary of one of its constituent members, the Tasmanian Caverneering Club—one of the oldest continuously active caving clubs in the world. The anniversary dinner was well attended by the State's industrious caving community.

SB

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

● Controversial cave closure

The collapse of a section of Weebubbie Cave on the Nullarbor Plain (reported in *Wild Information*, *Wild* no 63) has prompted the Department of Land Administration permanently to ban all access to the cave, infuriating some within the caving community. A mining engineer employed by the DLA to inspect the cave following the collapse declared it to be unsafe due to the danger of further rockfall from the lip of the entrance doline. The DLA immediately announced that public access to the cave would—without exception—be banned, that the steel access ladders descending into the doline would be removed and that signs would be erected warning of the ban.

Most cavers are willing to admit that their sport entails some danger but many are angry that land management authorities increasingly choose to 'manage' the public land under their jurisdiction by excluding all comers—possibly the least effective but easiest (and cheapest) form of bureaucratic management of public land.

SB

NORTHERN TERRITORY

● Take plenty of water...

A small team of young Australians will attempt to walk the length of the Larapinta Trail in the West MacDonnell Ranges in July. The Larapinta 97 expedition will pit four walkers—assisted by a three-member, vehicle-based support crew—against the 220+ kilometre walking track which traverses some of Australia's most inhospitable country. The team members, all less than 23 years old, expect the journey to take three weeks.

OVERSEAS

● Australian in multisports victory

Australian Ian Anderson was a member of the successful Fairydown EcoInternet team which won the arduous 1996 Southern Traverse, an annual event in the wilds of New Zealand's South Island. After 300 kilometres of kayaking, mountain biking and foot travel through some of the country's toughest terrain (between Te Anau and Queenstown), Fairydown EcoInternet just pipped the defending champions—the local three-person team Outside Sport—by less than two minutes. Outside Sport had made up more than 3 hours and 15 minutes on the final running section of the race by taking an unexpected 'short cut' over Walter Peak rather than following the longer but flatter route chosen by the other competitors. The

winners crossed the finishing line in just over 56 hours.

The exact course of the Southern Traverse is always a closely guarded secret and this year competitors only found out what lay immediately ahead as they completed each section. The race was run in difficult conditions, with a series of cold fronts each dumping up to 30 centimetres of snow on parts of the course. An exhausted Japanese team decided to catch a little sleep along the road and were woken a few hours later by other competi-



Arthur Clarke, President of the newly amalgamated Southern Tasmanian Cavers, shows off the caving technology of yesteryear.

itors who found them covered with several centimetres of snow.

Derek Paterson

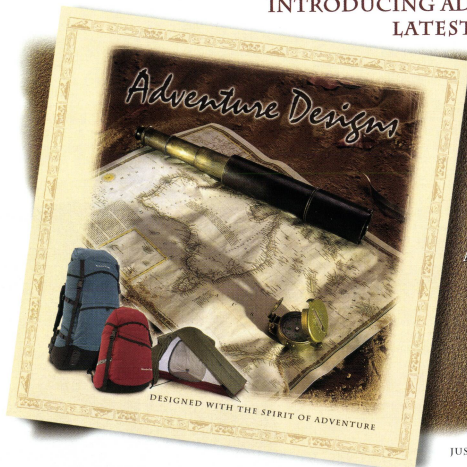
● Watch the step!

A joint Slovenian–Italian caving expedition to the Kanin Massif in Slovenia has discovered the world's deepest natural shaft. The pitch was estimated to be more than 500 metres deep, exceeding the previous record of 410 metres for a shaft in the K3 cave in the west Caucasus (see *Wild Information*, *Wild* no 46). The cave containing the pitch is still to be fully surveyed and has not yet been named. ■

SB

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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A photograph of a person sleeping in the back of a blue station wagon. The person is lying down, covered by a blue sleeping bag. The car's rear window and taillight are visible. A sticker on the window reads "Of course you can't hurt". Another sticker on the rear fender says "SPECTRUM COAST".

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Government targets Victoria's favourite park for 'development'

● Up to their old tricks?

Conservationists were angered in January when the logging industry once again blamed 'greenies' for vandalism of logging equipment despite a growing acceptance that such acts may form part of a pattern of 'dirty tricks', often intended to sully the environment movement's reputation. The Wilderness Society, reacting to the accusations of vandalism which followed the damaging of two logging machines in the native forests of East Gippsland in Victoria, said: 'Before police even finished their investigation and without a shred of evidence the logging industry blamed the vandalism on conservationists. This is now a common pattern of behaviour from the logging industry. In reality, no conservationist has ever been charged as a result of police investigations.'

An earlier police internal memo obtained by the society under State Freedom of Information laws warned officers not to fall for the 'anti-greenie' line: 'Information has been received that with the fluctuating politics of the wood-chipping debate, instances of damage to logging equipment in forest areas might become more prevalent. This relates particularly to damage being done by pro-logging interests in an attempt to discredit the anti-wood-chipping and conservation movements...DO NOT assume that any act of damage to logging equipment or logging infrastructure is done by conservationists or members of anti-logging groups.'

The Wilderness Society has drawn attention to the 'endemic level of violence in the timber industry between competing contractors and unions' and quotes that a senior logging-union official said while discussing conflict between rival unions on Radio National: 'We know how to sugar trucks... And you [conservationists] probably got the blame for it... they knew who it was—we told those contractors to behave you f---ing selves or the same thing will happen...'

● Antarctic airstrip rumblings

The debacle of the aborted airstrip at the French Antarctic base at Dumont d'Urville



Norman Bay, Wilsons Promontory, Victoria. The proposed hotel would have been visible above the low ridge behind the beach in the middle of the photo! (See box on page 23.)
David Neilson

does not appear to have been sufficient warning to Australia's Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill who, according to a report in Melbourne's *Age* newspaper in January, is examining several options for the construction of a rock airstrip at Australia's base at Davis in Antarctica. The government, apparently unhappy with Australia's continued reliance on ship-based logistics for its Antarctic science programme (something to which France reverted after its own airstrip misadventure), is allegedly investigating the possibility of resupplying the country's bases by air. Although a number of environmentally sensitive sites are reported to have been rejected, the current best candidate is said to require the levelling of several hills on one of the rare ice-free patches of the fragile Antarctic mainland. Greenpeace has expressed concerns at the possibility of increased pollution of the pristine Antarctic environment

resulting from the use of large aircraft to resupply bases.

● New greenhouse figures

The latest CSIRO climate models indicate that average temperatures in Australia will rise by at least 0.3°C—and possibly as much as 1.4°C—in the next 35 years. Perhaps the most worrying forecast is that winter rainfall levels will fall across much of the continent, affecting water resources, agriculture and biodiversity. Summer rainfall may also diminish.

The models incorporate a number of factors not previously considered, including the effect on greenhouse warming of deep-ocean currents and the cooling of the upper atmosphere caused by aerosols. The predictions are in line with global forecasts recently released by the international Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Last year Australia led a consortium of fossil-fuel-producing nations attempting to water down international action on greenhouse warming. The argument was that fossil-fuel producers should be cushioned from the economic impact of reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases.

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wilsons prom: victory or setback?

Early in January Victorians won a heartening concession from the State Government with its decision to abandon plans for a 150-bed, four-star hotel at Tidal River in Wilsons Promontory National Park. Yet Premier Kennett's announcement is only a partial victory and major threats of commercialisation remain. The Victorian National Parks Association is continuing its 'Hands Off the Prom' campaign in an effort to prevent these developments (see Action Box item 5).

Wilsons Promontory (known affectionately to Victorians as 'the Prom'—see the special feature in *Wild* no 50) is Victoria's oldest National Park and one of the State's most loved natural areas. It was declared an International Biosphere Reserve in 1981.

Plans for a range of commercial developments for the park, including a 150-bed hotel, were first announced at the end of October 1996 by the (then) National Parks Service of the Department of Natural Resources & Environment. These proposals provoked a storm of protest from the Victorian community and in the months following the plans' release the VNPA has led an intensive campaign against development proposals. The VNPA has received unprecedented levels of support for the campaign from thousands of individuals and groups. Joining the outcry have been campers, walking and environment groups, local businesses, teachers, scientists, a former chairman of the Land Conservation Council (David Scott) and even a former Liberal conservation minister (Bill Borthwick).

A high point of the campaign was reached on 29 December when almost 2000 protesters gathered at Tidal River's main beach at Norman Bay to form the message 'HANDS OFF!'

On 17 January Premier Kennett announced revised plans for the Prom. While acknowledging the huge public outcry against the original plans the Premier discounted this as a reason for the government's decision, saying instead that the proposed hotel would not have been economically viable.

The announcement came just 17 days after the closure of public submissions to the plans—3238 were received—although the government had earlier advised the VNPA that the plans would take two to three months to finalise. Coincidentally, a by-election was imminent in an electorate close to the Prom (Gippsland West) where opposition to the plans was growing. (The government later suffered a huge electoral setback when it lost the seat after a 13 per cent swing against it.)

Simultaneously with abandoning the hotel, Premier Kennett announced the following proposals:

- a 45-bed privately funded and operated walkers' lodge to be situated outside the present Tidal River area
- a new track from the lighthouse to Waterloo Bay in a high-quality wilderness area
- at least one hut, exclusive to commercial walkers, to be built at Halfway Hut, and 'consideration will be given to standing camps'
- the Lighthouse Track (also in a high-quality wilderness area) to stay open to vehicles 'to provide adequate management of the historic lighthouse'
- at Tidal River: '...additional roofed accommodation, a wider range of food services, more accommodation similar to the existing motor huts, cabins and group lodges, more picnic facilities and camper kitchens'
- 'options for providing a meals service will be investigated broadly'

- that the primary objectives should be to 'preserve the natural splendour of the entire Wilsons Promontory National Park for all time, and improve facilities, in order to offer much wider accessibility to the park' [Wild's italics].

This latter point seems to be doublespeak for commercial development and ominously reflects the recent Federal Senate Heritage Access Inquiry into 'balancing public access with the principle of "user pays" in order to defray the public costs of maintaining natural and cultural heritage assets such as National Parks and museums with particular consideration to issues of fairness and equity'.

In parks generally the push for commercialisation is rampant. The VNPA's gravest fear for all parks, including the Prom, is of development bit by bit, year after year, especially if private finance is allowed. After all, 'growth' is the lifeblood of private development: more lodges, on-site parking, tennis courts, sauna, swimming-pool, more and upgraded tracks in remote and wild areas, more huts and more facilities for staff to service all this.

The VNPA response to Premier Kennett's announcement is to:

- call for developments to be outside the park, where they can contribute to the regional economy and compete on an equal footing with other tourist services
- oppose privately funded commercial developments at the Prom, including the 45-bed lodge and the construction of huts and 'standing camps' in the remote south
- oppose new walking tracks in high-quality wilderness areas of the park
- ask that the VNPA take part in discussions about what is intended concerning additional roofed accommodation and provision of a wider range of food services.

The VNPA encourages visitor access to our natural areas—in fact, it has the largest bushwalking and activities programme in Victoria. But it will uphold the letter and the spirit of the *National Parks Act* which declares that the primary purpose of National and State Parks is nature conservation. Parks are precious natural assets to be cherished; they are not mere resources to be handed over to the highest bidder.

Barbara Vaughan



● Snowy 'a disgrace'

Local conservation groups in north-east Victoria and southern New South Wales are calling for urgent action to undo the environmental degradation of the Snowy River, which was effectively 'switched off' when the Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme was completed 30 years ago. The Snowy now carries only a fraction of the Australian Alps snow melt which once made it one of Australia's grandest wild rivers and for much of its length it is plagued by blackberry infestation and by erosion. A spokesperson for the Orbost-based Snowy River Improvement Trust described the river as being 'little more than a gutter at Dalgety' and called for a 28 per cent increase in the volume of water released into the Snowy River at Jindabyne.

● Plants threatened

Almost a quarter of Australia's native plants are considered to be rare or endangered according to a new edition of a catalogue of such plants published by the CSIRO. The fourth edition of *Rare or Threatened Australian Plants* lists 5031 species, 76 of which are already presumed extinct.

● Wild screenings

Australia's first film festival dedicated to the environment was held in Sydney last June. Since then the concept has snowballed into a national touring exhibition. The national Wild Spaces project has already been screened in Melbourne, Byron Bay and Hobart and many more venues are planned for this year—including the Blue Mountains in summer 1997–98.

The Wild Spaces project intends to inform, to present film makers' varied expressions of the planet's wild spaces, to raise issues of social justice and conservation and to entertain. Australian and overseas films and videos are presented under the categories of wilderness adventure, natural history, indigenous issues, social justice issues, environmental campaigns, deep ecology and music.

The next Wild Spaces will be in Sydney in early June. For more information, contact Gary Caganoff on (041) 997 2427.

QUEENSLAND

● Resort fears realised?

Concerns over the effect of the controversial resort development at Port Hinchinbrook on the surrounding wet tropics appear to have been borne out by recent contention over the developer's commitment to environmental protection. It was reported late in December that the federal environment department—its support of the project was based on the adoption of 'world's best practice' environmental safeguards—had written to the developer to express concern over an apparent failure to adhere to the environmental conditions imposed on the project. Local conservation groups claim that little effort is being made to meet the standards outlined when planning permission was granted. The Federal Government is reported to have threatened to withdraw its approval

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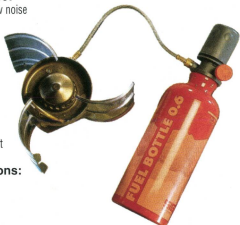
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for the project if these conditions—in particular, the need for a study of the impact of sedimentation on a nearby colony of dugong—are not met, a suggestion to which the developer responded with threats of legal action. In January he was reported to have described the environmental restrictions as 'useless and outdated'.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Public supports wilderness

The November 1996 issue of the *Colong Bulletin* reports the results of a Newspoll public-opinion survey which indicated that almost 80 per cent of New South Wales voters supported the protection of those native forests required to make up a 'comprehensive, adequate and representative' reserve system. The result is in line with those of other opinion polls around the country and gives further weight to claims that the conservation movement's battle to win the 'hearts and minds' of the general public on the issue of native forests has been won. Unfortunately—with 1997 set to be another year of record wood-chip exports—the likelihood of transferring this public support into political change still

seems as distant as ever. In the meantime, Australian forests continue to shrink.

VICTORIA

Parks to become 'pay per view'?

Last year was filled with attacks on the integrity of Victoria's National Parks and the Victorian National Parks Association has publicly expressed strong fears about the State Government's management of Victoria's finest natural areas.

Of grave concern was the abrupt abolition—without any consultation—of the National Parks Service in December. A new, corporate body—Parks Victoria—now operates Victoria's parks, with legislation governing its operation still to be drafted. Parks Victoria is effectively a merger of the NPS with Melbourne Parks and Waterways, the authority which brought the Grand Prix to Melbourne's Albert Park. Until now that authority is considered *not* to have run parks under its jurisdiction principally for nature conservation.

Given the predominance of the 'marketing and sales' mentality in the recent rash of inappropriate proposals for the exploitation of National Parks, conservationists await the heralded amendment of Victoria's *National Parks Act* with understandable alarm, and fear the dilution of its nature conservation objectives.

According to the VNPA the steady loss of nature conservation expertise and empathy from the conservation department since the early 1990s has now culminated in the 'emasculat[ion]' of the role of Director of National Parks. The clock has been turned back a decade and tried and failed management practices for parks—which regarded policy making and management as separate functions—have been reinstated.

Other attacks on the parks system in Victoria in 1996 included:

- a proposal for a tourism centre near the Twelve Apostles (Port Campbell National Park) in a location at present undeveloped, a plan hatched without community consultation or reference to the preparation of a draft management plan for the park
- government endorsement—again without community consultation—of a massive tourism complex on a nationally significant stretch of coastline at the Nobbies on Phillip Island. Opposition to this project is thought to have contributed to a huge anti-government swing in a local by-election in February.
- the introduction of legislation into the Victorian Parliament facilitating the quarrying of sandstone at the old Heatherlie site in the Grampians National Park (now unlikely to proceed after the unilateral cancellation by the Premier of the Parliament House restoration for which the stone was intended) and for mineral exploration in the soon-to-be-proclaimed Chiltern National Park
- the removal of education officers and interpretation activities from parks to

decision only partly, and temporarily, rescinded before Christmas). Instead, activities once run by rangers—and other, new ventures—are to be contracted out to private operators.

- a proposal in the Mallee Parks Management Plan to build a new tourist road of two-wheel-drive standard along the route of an existing management-vehicles-only, four-wheel-drive track in Wyperfeld National Park

As well there is the government's continuing resistance to adding six lighthouse reserves to adjacent National Parks. The Point Hicks and Cape Otway reserves were leased for tourism operations on 1 January.

For more information on any of these important issues, see Action Box item 1.

Doug Humann

Forest 'agreement'

The first Regional Forest Agreement—part of plans to provide certainty of forest access for the logging industry and, supposedly, protection of high-conservation-value forests for the next 20 years—was to be signed in East Gippsland in February after months of delays. The Wilderness Society warned that significant areas of old-growth forest were likely to be earmarked for destruction under the agreement and that the 'State and Federal Governments are ignoring important scientific information in the RFA process.' In December three senior academics including environmental scientist Jamie Kirkpatrick claimed that the RFA deliberations were 'scientifically flawed' and unable to guarantee 'nature conservation requirements'.

Logging in East Gippsland threatens populations of a number of rare or endangered species including the sooty owl and spot-tailed quoll (formerly known as the tiger quoll). In January the *Age* reported that DNRE foresters told a meeting of environmentalists that the conservation measures contained in the draft RFA were 'experimental' and that the effect of the measures on threatened species was 'unknown'. Although small areas are to be set aside for the protection of endangered species no surveys have been conducted to determine whether those species actually inhabit the protection zones and there is no provision for adequate investigation of the health of threatened plant and animal species in the area once the RFA is in place. To become involved, see Action Box item 2.

Hotham expansion to proceed

Downhill skiing infrastructure at the Mt Hotham resort is to be dramatically expanded under plans detailed by the Mt Hotham Skiing Company last year. The first indications of the expansion were reported in Green Pages in *Wild* no 62; since that time details of the plans have been released and the news is bad. The construction of new lifts along Marys Slide towards Mt Loch will extend to within a

Action Box

Readers can take action on the following matters covered in Green Pages in this issue.

- 1 Contact the VNPA, 10 Parliament Pl, East Melbourne, Vic 3002; phone (03) 9650 8296, fax (03) 9645 6843.
- 2 Contact the Wilderness Society, 355 Little Bourke St, Melbourne, Vic 3000; phone (03) 9670 5229, fax (03) 9670 1040.
- 3 Contact Rod Waterman of the VNPA at the address listed above.
- 4 Write to the Premier, Richard Court, Parliament House, Perth, WA 6000, and express your disapproval of the sand-mining proposal. Contact the D'Entrecasteaux Coalition for more information at PO Box 142, Denmark, WA 6333; phone (098) 48 1644, fax (098) 48 1268.
- 5 Write to your State MPs (ring the Electoral Commission on 13 1832 for names and addresses if necessary). Say that the decision still allows major commercialisation of the Prom. Express concern about how decisions were made without apparent reference to submissions and ask how future decisions will be made about the rest of the management plans. Ask whether the MP can take part in future decisions, and whether he/she will keep you informed. State your opposition to commercial developments at the Prom (including the 45-bed lodge) and the expansion of walking tracks in the high-quality wilderness in the south. Contact the VNPA at the address listed above for more information.

The VNPA needs your support

Have you ever

- Camped in the Alpine NP?
- Canoeed in the Snowy River NP?
- Rockclimbed in the Grampians NP?
- Walked the coastal wilderness at Croajingolong NP?



The Victorian National Parks Association has been the major force behind the creation of these parks and much of Victoria's excellent system of parks and reserves.

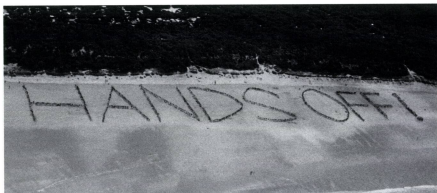
The VNPA is a non-profit, non-government, nature conservation organisation formed in 1952. Since that time the area of Victoria dedicated to national, state and wilderness parks has risen from 127,011 to 2,942,073 hectares, and the number of parks from 16 to 70.

Now, more than ever, these precious natural areas are at risk. Threats include mineral exploration in Chiltern NP, roading through remote areas in Mallee parks, woodchipping in native forests, ski resort expansion at Mt Hotham and Falls Creek, and, of course, private commercial development at Wilsons Promontory NP (see Green Pages and Editorial in this issue of *Wild*).

The VNPA works on many conservation issues other than parks, including those of marine, native grasslands, box-ironbark forests, alpine areas and the Central Highlands. The VNPA also hosts the Marine and Coastal Community Network and the Threatened Species Network.

'Hands off The Prom'

The VNPA's effectiveness can be seen from the battle over this park. An intensive campaign spearheading a tide of community opposition has seen the abandonment of a hotel proposal at the Prom. To lead this crucial campaign, the VNPA has dedicated three staff for six months and mobilised a huge pool of volunteers.



Bushwalking and activities programme

The VNPA runs the largest outdoor activities programme in Victoria. In our six-monthly programme you will find descriptions of more than 200 activities—bushwalks; extended tours (Victoria and interstate); Walk, Talk and Gawks; cycling; skiing; canoeing; and excursions to parks. All activities are graded 'easy', 'medium' or 'hard'.

Membership—your gift to Victoria's natural areas

The strength of the Victorian National Parks Association is its members. The VNPA survives primarily on member subscriptions and donations. To continue its critical conservation work, the VNPA needs your support. You can make a difference by joining or signing up a friend—Membership rates: Single \$40 / Concession \$25 / Household \$50.

Ring for a membership form and a free six-monthly bushwalking booklet
OR

just forward a cheque or credit card details for your membership.

Include your name, address and phone number, and send to:
VNPA, 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne 3002. Tel (03) 9650 8296 Fax (03) 9654 6843



few metres of the Alpine National Park boundary at the Orchard. Despite reported assurances last July that it had nothing to do with the clearing without a permit of snow gums at nearby Horsehair Plain, the company also announced plans to construct a jet-capable airport on that very site. Other new facilities at the Hotham satellite village at Dinner Plain will include a nine-hole golf course, polo field and grandstand, and an outdoors education centre. Sixty new units will be built at the Mt Hotham

values and precluding downhill skiing development. It had been hoped that the State Cabinet would recognise the drawbacks of the latter option which were identified by an environmental effects statement prepared last year and reject plans for the expansion of the downhill ski industry to another alpine summit.

If you would like to help to keep a check on the activities of the downhill skiing industry in the High Country, see Action Box item 3.

most endangered in the world—would follow traditional migration routes from Victoria to their summer range in South-west Tasmania and thereby raise hopes for the future of the species.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

● National Park or sand mine?

The State Government is likely to permit highly destructive sand mining adjacent to unique and fragile Lake Jasper in the D'Entrecasteaux National Park on the State's southern coast. A Department of

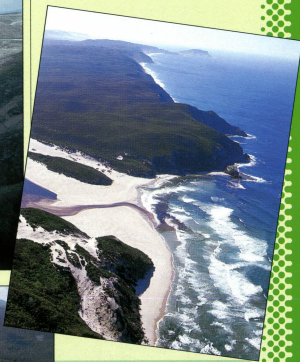


village and the possibility of a helicopter shuttle service to Falls Creek has been advertised.

The new lifts will be clearly visible from many parts of the adjacent Alpine National Park including the summits of nearby Mts Loch and Feathertop, and numerous snow gums will be axed to clear the new runs along Marys Slide.

At the MHSC's other resort, at Falls Creek, an ARC 'community consultation' survey recently raised the possibility of the construction of lifts in the Mt McKay area and even the use of the Alpine National Park for resort-related activities. The survey makes reference to the 'close ties' between the Falls Creek resort and the National Park and asks respondents for their views on the questions: 'Is greater integrated use of the National Park and Falls Creek desirable?' and 'What types of additional activities or facilities would you like to see developed within the National Park?' [*Wild's italics.*]

As *Wild* went to press, plans for the construction of yet another downhill ski resort, at Mt Stirling, were rejected by the Planning Minister Rob Maclellan. The overwhelming majority of public submissions to an inquiry into the future use of the mountain had favoured a low-impact approach protecting the area's natural



Top left, Victoria's Mt Hotham ski resort is an environmental low point at the best of times, but when the snow melts the full extent of the destruction is revealed. **Doug Humann.** **Top right**, the Western Australian Government is considering allowing sand mining adjacent to the D'Entrecasteaux National Park. **Simon Neville.** **Left**, work in progress on Horsehair Plain for a jet-capable airport to service Mt Hotham. **Humann**

TASMANIA

● World's oldest plant

The Tasmanian native plant *Lomatia tasmanica* is the 'oldest' plant in the world according to recent research reported by the Department of Environment & Land Management late last year. Two colonies of the shrubby plant near Cox Bight in the State's South-west have been found to be clones, genetically identical to a plant that grew in the same place more than 40 000 years ago.

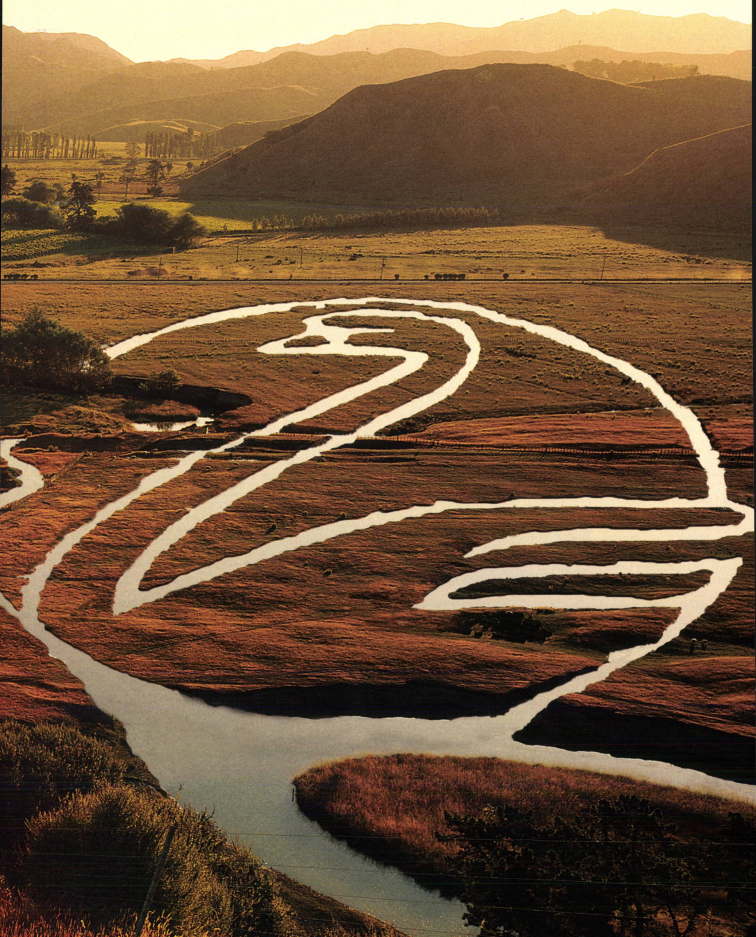
● Pretty Polly

The release of a number of captive-bred Tasmanian orange-bellied parrots in Victoria last year is considered by DELM to have been a complete success. It was hoped that the birds—which are among the

Conservation & Land Management study identified a serious risk from the proposed mine to the park's wetlands, the home of many species of waterbirds. A significant area was recently excised from the National Park to facilitate sand mining, which may occur within 300 metres of Lake Jasper's summer shore line. According to the D'Entrecasteaux Coalition, which is fighting the proposal, even the environment officer of the company planning to conduct the mining has conceded that 'full and complete rehabilitation will be impossible'. See Action Box item 4 to see how you can help in this important campaign. ●

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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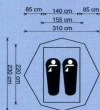
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In the lands of the 'first people'

Bushwalkers may come to celebrate Native Title, by *Quentin Chester*



Animals like family to us.
Earth our mother,
Eagle our cousin,
Tree is pumping blood like us.
We all one.

Bill Neidjie, Kakadu traditional owner

Over the past few months I've travelled to many countries. My journeys have taken me to distant places, shimmering lands where the horizons seem to go on for ever. In my travels I have been fortunate to meet a few of the locals. Although their lives and histories are quite unlike my own I've appreciated the chance to listen to them. I've been surprised by their quick humour and their family loyalty. To visit these countries you do not need a passport: they are all on my home continent, the island called Australia.

One of the lands I visited recently is the home of the Anangu people. There, in the heart of the continent, I took a morning stroll through the mulga scrub with one of the local men, Mr Walkabout. I saw many things even though we didn't wander far.

My guide showed me how his people use fire and look for food. We visited a wiltja—a bush shelter—where he made kiti, a kind of glue prepared from the powdery resin beaten off acacia twigs. I saw how bows are cut from bloodwoods and string is made by spinning human hair. Mr Walkabout also spoke of how his grandfather hunted for kangaroo and emu.

As we walked I began to look at the bush around us in a different light. More than just a scattering of trees and shrubs across a red plain, this is the living place of the Anangu people. The stories Mr Walkabout shared with me were all the more impressive because he spoke in his own Pitjantjatjara language. An interpreter translated the words but the true feeling was there in Mr Walkabout's sure phrasing, the occasional glinting smile and his descriptive hand gestures.

To walk side by side with this man was to feel the presence of someone whose understanding of the bush was not only the product of acute observation but was drawn from a much larger fount of knowledge. He may have made this short

Nigel Gellar at Lightning Man rock-art site, Arnhem Land. *Quentin Chester. Background, Aboriginal art in the Tier Range, Kimberley, Russell Willis*

trek and said these same words many times before; it didn't seem to matter. When we sat together on the ground Mr Walkabout drew shapes in the sand to illustrate the stories he told from the Tjukurpa—the Anangu name for their tribal law, practical wisdom and spiritual beliefs. There was only time to hear the outlines of a few narratives but there was no mistaking their significance.

Far from being 'tales' these accounts of the creation of the land and all living things embody an ongoing philosophy, an expression of the responsibility the people feel for their country and for each other. Aboriginal clans form many nations, yet in most of the places I've visited the people maintain a vivid sense of their origins. The traditional stories vary but there are common patterns of belonging and a widespread belief that they are the 'first

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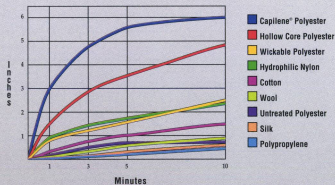
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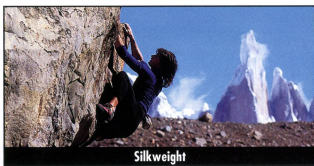
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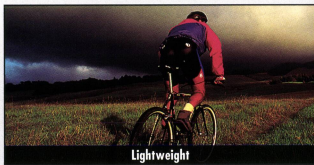


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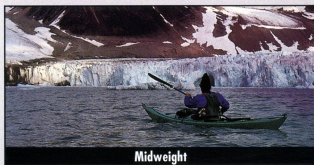
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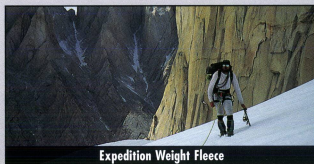
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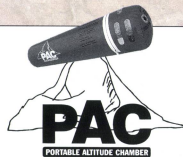
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people—that before them there was nothing. It was their ancestors or creation beings who shaped the hills, rocks, creeks and waterholes in their epic journeys across the land. These same forces gave life to the plants and animals and invigorated the seasonal rains.

To regard the country thus is very different from the way 'whitefellas' like me have been taught to view the world. I come from a culture infatuated with measurement and scientific explanations. We are fond of problems that appear to need resolving. Rituals, storytelling and spiritual beliefs don't get much of a look-in these days. Accordingly, when Aboriginal countries do make news it's almost invariably in terms of what are perceived to be 'issues' or 'finds'.

Take, for example, the 'discovery' at Jinning in the Northern Territory in September last year. The provisional dating of rock carvings at 75 000 years before present and sediment layers containing artefacts at 116 000 to 176 000 years gave the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age* an old-fashioned newspaper scoop. These dates are verifiable time bombs and have the potential to rewrite many learned theories of human evolution and migration. Inevitably, a professional squabble ensued about the accuracy of the thermoluminescence techniques used. Certainly, if confirmed, these 'finds' raise some fascinating academic conundrums.

At the same time the dates in themselves are just numbers. They reveal precious little about the breadth of the human experience involved; about the people who made the carvings and used the artefacts. Nor does this fixation with numbers mean much to their descendants who, depending on the political flavour of the decade, are being told to adopt assimilation, self-determination or empowerment as their path forward. If you believe that you have been here 'forever', the scramble to pinpoint a figure of 40 000, 60 000 or 175 000 years might seem rather irrelevant.

I must confess that during my own trips to the desert and the stone country of the north I didn't feel troubled by the vagaries of luminescence dates. Much more interesting to me was the realisation of the extent to which this continent has been travelled. From all those journeys come the layers of knowledge about the grain of the land and the turn of the seasons. For generations people have gazed at the cast of light on rocky outcrops, have studied the way creeks flow or native fruits ripen or certain birds turn or native fruits ripen or certain birds turn. For generations Aboriginal people have been performing essential research about the interdependence of life. If it can be accepted that Aborigines have been here for a very long time, one's attention can then turn to their extraordinary relationships with place and with the past.

To get a glimpse of these connections it's not a bad idea to turn your back on the books and museums, switch off the media debates, get out of town and take a walk in

the bush. It doesn't much matter where—after all, there aren't too many parts of Australia Aboriginal people haven't called home. Even if there are no traditional owners on hand to guide you, or cultural sites to marvel at, you can still try to imagine what it must have been like for the families living in this country, how they gathered food and took shelter in the extremes of climate and the land.

On the face of it bushwalkers and their ilk might seem well placed to share a few Aboriginal perspectives. And not just the most basic imperatives of traditional life but the affinities with terrain, the spirit of journey making and an earthy regard for one's fellow creatures; all these are expressed in stories, in art and in music. To date, however, there are few signs of cultural bridges in the bush. It's early days yet. Much of the Aboriginal understanding that makes the land come alive is only now being given its due. Similarly, many of the areas with a compelling cultural presence are remote and rarely travelled by outsiders.

Even in the much-vaunted Kakadu, where the opportunities to get out there and celebrate the wonders of the landscape and its heritage are virtually limitless, the official attitude towards bushwalking is, well, less than enthusiastic. According to the park's *Draft Management Plan* of 1996: 'Traditional owners do not wish to encourage more bushwalking in the park and have indicated that bushwalking needs to be more strictly controlled.' Doubtless the park's owners and managers have specific concerns about 'culturally sensitive sites'. At the same time the call for more controls is perhaps simply a reflection of the difficulties faced by any agency or group trying to manage such a prodigious—not to mention popular—tract of country. As a result of such a policy, bushwalking once again finds itself in the notorious 'too hard' receptacle.

It's probably fair to say that there has been only limited contact between Aboriginal people and the community of bushwalkers. The notions of 'adventure' and 'wilderness' apparently haven't a lot of currency among traditional owners. My impression is that most Aboriginal communities are trying to get on with their lives. At the same time they are responding to a myriad of outside opportunities and pressures. It might be frustrating for the casual visitor that traditional owners are often not forthcoming as interpreters of their country but it could be a mistake to assume that indifference is the reason for this state of affairs.

There are, nevertheless, some notable exceptions. Just to the south of Kakadu is Manyallaluk, a small community with a strong reputation for its cultural tours. From their outlying bush camps the local people show visitors some of the richness of their Arnhem Land estate. During a recent visit I joined a group accompanied by Nigel Gellar, one of the local men. He guided us on walks through the stone

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country, sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge of the bush. We visited rock shelters and ceremonial sites where his ancestors had used the expanses of sandstone as canvases for art. Lying on our backs in the cool shadows of the overhangs we gazed up at paintings of animals and spirit beings. We listened as Nigel carefully explained aspects of a life and mythology made palpable in ochre.

Such encounters often prompt more questions than can ever be easily answered. During our walk we came upon paintings and sites that Nigel had never seen. There were images that were not appropriate for general discussion and others that remained baffling even to him. A compact, thoughtful man, Nigel would spend a lot of time in these rock shelters stroking his thick beard, lost in contemplation.

For me the value of these sojourns is not that they help me to reconcile disparate world views or expound on Aboriginal people and their 'problems'. Nor do I go in search of ancient beliefs that I can appropriate to fill some spiritual void. Rather, they simply give me the truth of my own first-hand experiences with a culture and a people who have a lot to share. As well as hearing of traditional life and stories from the dreaming we talked with Nigel and others at Manyallaluk about assorted subjects from football and politics to the perils of parenthood. In such a context Aboriginality is much more than history or an idea: it is people making their way in the world.

I know a few bushwalkers who are fearful about Native Title. They worry that their freedom to enjoy certain areas might be restricted, that they will have to get permits to visit favourite haunts. To my mind, however, the concept of Native Title promises to be among the most liberating ever to come out of Canberra. Beyond its fundamental recognition of the relationship between indigenous people and their land it gives all of us the freedom to see the country afresh. For traditional owners it offers the confidence to restate a vision which has survived against all odds. A lot of what is written and talked about regarding Aboriginal people points to what has been lost, what cannot be explained and who is to blame. Yet much of the culture remains and it is on the move. With time and patience common ground can be found. Given the wonders of the countries bounded by our shore and all the reasons for us to feel more gratitude than guilt, asking permission seems a small price for travellers to these places to pay. ☺

Quentin Chester

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in *Wild* no 31) writes regularly about going bush. He is the co-author of *The Outdoors Companion*, *The Kimberley—Horizons of Stone* and is at present working on a book which explores the diversity of 28 Australian islands from the tropics to the sub-Antarctic.

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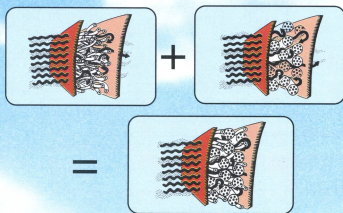
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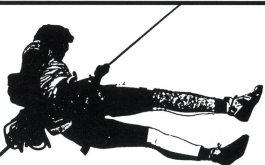
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Zen and the art of navigation

Peace, love and mappiness, by Hans Fah



Where in the wide, wide world of sports am I? Wally stood there holding his head in his hands while rocking on his heels. He was by now furious for not having made a serious effort to acquire navigation skills. But this was only meant to be a day trip. A few hours ago it had been all too easy to follow the bright orange track markers to the summit, but where were they now?

With just 15 minutes left before nightfall, Wally slowly looked down at his compass and cursed himself 'you fool!' For although equipped with a good compass and detailed map he had little idea what to do with them.

Like an average bloke who has been pushed just that bit too far, Wally jettisoned his compass and bolted off insanely into the bush... 'Waaaaaagaaaaagaaaaagaaahhhhhhhhh!'

Fortunately, there's no need to end up like our mate Wally because anyone can learn to navigate. Land navigation is not a

dark art that needs to be feared. Every year we hear of individuals or groups who have got themselves so geographically embarrassed that search and rescue authorities had to be mobilised. Some search locations are most surprising—small patches of National Park that you'd hardly consider remote and isolated. One can only conclude that the lost souls were, like Wally, totally ignorant of basic navigation principles. (And, sorry, the Global Positioning System is not a modern-day quick fix. The GPS does not replace common sense, experience and skill. It can, however, be effectively exploited by a trained navigator who will use it to enhance his or her capabilities. A novice is likely to place total faith in this US-government satellite network—a risky practice indeed.)

To learn navigation from a magazine article is a bit like learning to drive by correspondence. Accordingly, this article

'I told you we should have read that navigation article.' Mt Buffalo, Victoria.
Alistair Paton

will not attempt to teach navigation. Instead, I shall try to provide a set of guidelines detailing

- what you should know.
- why you need to know it.
- where/how you can learn it.

Since the art of navigation consists in both technical and practical aspects the ideal way to learn is a balance of studying and doing.

Fortunately, a few good navigation instruction publications particularly relevant to Australian conditions are available. Stage one is to read one or two of these good books—several times. As for the practical component, the sport of rogaining—or a basic day walk with a more experienced partner—provides an ideal, relatively

controlled learning environment for developing practical navigation skills. The techniques and maps used in rogaining (or when using a map to follow a set route during a simple day walk) are much the same as those required during an extended wilderness trip. (Orienteering events, on the other hand, usually use highly detailed, 'purpose-built' maps—a luxury that you won't normally have in the real world.)

By associating with other experienced navigators you're sure to pick up much useful advice. Think of it as you would of chess. If you want to lift your game you need to play with the masters, not with your mates.

Bushwalking clubs are obviously other places where you can pick up navigation skills from experienced members; however, if you're really keen on sharpening your act rogaining will provide you with the most intensive training available.

As a minimum standard for wilderness navigation you should strive to achieve competency in the following key skills.

● Map-based skills

- Understand map scales and how to measure distance.
- Be familiar with the main symbols used on topographic maps.
- Understand the basics of the contour-line system (for showing 3D relief).
- Know how to orient your map to the ground.
- Be able to plot or give a six-figure grid reference coordinate.

● Compass-based skills

- Understand the 'three norths' (true, grid, magnetic).
- Be able to calculate the magnetic variation for your map.
- Be able to adjust your magnetic compass in accordance with the magnetic variation for your map.
- Be able to use the protractor function of a base-plate compass to calculate grid-bearing between two locations.
- Be able to travel across country to your destination using a base-plate compass.

When you have a reasonable grasp of all these skills you will have the ability better to plan your trips through recognition of terrain depicted on a map. You will also be able to navigate between locations without reliance on tracks, signs or track markers.

The initial stages of learning to navigate are like gathering together the scattered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. You need to understand basic concepts of surveying, geology and cartography. Only when you've acquired these rudiments will your jigsaw puzzle begin to form a clear picture.

MAP SCALES AND HOW TO MEASURE DISTANCE

Maps are drawn to various scales and which one is chosen depends on the map's intended application. For example, if you

are driving a vehicle through the outback you will cover a lot of ground in a short time. Accordingly, a map of a large area with less detail will suit you well. These are 'small-scale' maps.

At the other extreme, if you're on foot and moving through extremely steep, vegetated and difficult terrain you'll want the most detailed map available. And since your rate of advance will be quite slow in such terrain, it does not matter that the map only covers a small area. These are 'large-scale' maps.

Map scales are expressed mathematically as a representative fraction—for example, 1:100 000. This means that one unit of measurement on the map represents 100 000 units of measurement on the ground. In the case of a 1:100 000 scale map, one centimetre on the map represents one kilometre (100 000 centimetres) on the ground—a small-scale map.

Similarly, 1:25 000 means that one unit of measurement on the map represents 25 000 units of measurement on the ground. In the case of a 1:25 000 scale map, one centimetre on the map represents 25 000 centimetres (250 metres, a quarter of a kilometre) on the ground—a large-scale map.

If you are using any of the popular map scales employed for bushwalking—1:25 000, 1:50 000 or 1:100 000—you'll find that the grid squares are drawn on the map at exactly one kilometre intervals. This provides the first basic means of measuring distance on a map—counting grid squares! Other, more accurate, techniques entail marking ticks on a piece of paper aligned along your route and comparing this with the map's scale bar or using a map-distance measuring instrument. All good 'how to' navigation books will certainly include a chapter on scales and distance measuring.

MAP SYMBOLS

The margins around a map contain a host of information—the so-called 'marginal information'. Most topographic maps will have a table of map symbols. These are self-explanatory; nevertheless, you should take some time to become familiar with the symbols of the particular brand of maps you use. Depending on the type of terrain you're in, some symbols will be more important to know than others—for example, waterfalls, cliffs and quicksand!

Navigation tools—be equipped

- Compass (and whistle, both strung on the same piece of cord)
- Map (of appropriate area and scale)
- Pencil
- Note pad
- Waterproof map case (or snap-seal plastic bag)
- Small, spare compass (or ensure that there is a second compass within your group)

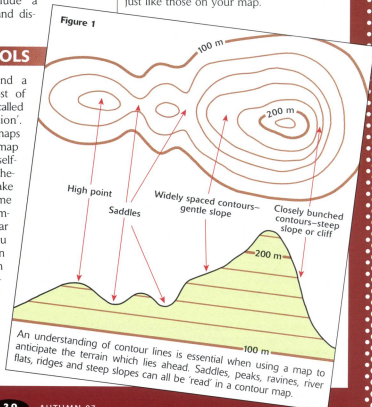
CONTOUR LINES

The earth is three-dimensional and maps are two-dimensional. So how do you show 3D land formations on a flat sheet of paper? With contour lines.

Contour lines are the brown, squiggly lines that cover your topographic map. To the novice these lines may simply look like a mess. To the navigator contour lines provide the means to interpret and visualise the 3D lie of the land.

Each line represents a particular elevation. (See Figure 1.) The difference in elevation between contour lines is fixed for each map. This value is known as the 'contour interval' and will be among the marginal information.

To grasp the basic concept of contour lines try this example. Find the roughest-looking potato in the cupboard and cut it in half. Place the flat surface on the table and draw lines around it with a Texta for each centimetre of vertical height. Now look down at the potato from directly above it. What you see are contour lines just like those on your map.



For ease of reading contour lines are generally printed light brown with every fifth line printed darker. The height represented by that contour is also printed on every fifth line.

Once you understand the concept of contour lines it's best to go to some high ground with a detailed map. Comparing actual features on the ground with the way they are represented on the map is a good way to get the hang of things.

To be able to interpret contour information is an important skill. It not only informs you of the terrain ahead but can help you to work out your present location by comparing the surrounding terrain with terrain depicted on the map.

MAP ORIENTATION

You need to know this quick yet important trick to work out your approximate position and where your route lies ahead of you. It also makes it much easier to read your map. A map is properly oriented when it is aligned with the corresponding features on the ground (and, consequently, with grid north—see below). If you are standing on clear, high ground with an oriented map you can easily match features on the ground such as a river, a mountain or a road with your map. (See Figure 2.) Furthermore, if you can identify at least three prominent features it becomes possible to establish your approximate position through the application of some mental triangulation and logic.

As well as orienting your map by aligning it with prominent features on the ground, you can orient it by using your compass.

Don't forget that you'll have to adjust for the difference between magnetic north (as indicated by the compass) and grid north (as shown on the map)—see below.

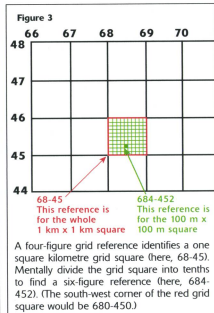
Some 'special edition' maps (made for popular areas) have magnetic north arrows printed on them. If you have a fairly recent map simply align one of these arrows with your compass needle. However, it is important not to confuse these magnetic north arrows with the magnetic variation diagram also located in the marginal information.

GRID REFERENCES

You should learn how to plot and provide grid references on and from a map for a number of reasons including the need to record important locations (such as water points or camp-sites) and to communicate your position to others. Most of us remember latitude and longitude from school geography lessons. The latitude and longitude system is generally reserved for marine and aeronautical charts since it is too awkward to use on detailed, large-scale maps. On topographic maps you'll find a numbered grid reference system instead of (or in addition to) 'lat' and 'long'. This grid system is commonly called the Australian Map Grid system (AMG). By using only six numbers you can pinpoint your location within 100 square metres on a given map.

The vertical grid lines on a topographic map are numbered from west to east and are referred to as 'eastings'. The horizontal lines numbered from south to north are 'northings'. When reading or giving a grid reference, eastings always come before

northings. (A handy reminder is to remember that E comes before N in the alphabet.) To begin with you can use a four-figure grid reference to identify a particular grid square; for example, 68-45. (See Figure 3.) This is the bottom left (south-west) corner of that grid square. By mentally dividing the grid square into tenths it is possible to define a position with a six-figure grid reference; for example, 684-452.



If you have to provide a grid reference to others, be sure also to tell them what map title, sheet number and scale you are using.

THE 'THREE NORTHS'

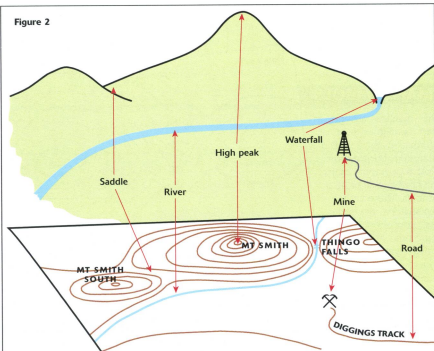
To establish and allow for local magnetic variation an understanding of the 'three norths' is required so that you can use your compass in conjunction with a map. In a nutshell, the 'three norths' are:

- True north: The geographical axis of our planet.
- Magnetic north: A place (quite some distance from true north) to which magnetised compass needles point. The approximate location of the magnetic north pole is Hudson Bay in Canada. An important fact about magnetic north is that it is always on the move, albeit slowly.
- Grid north: The vertical grid lines (eastings) on your map are aligned to grid north. Grid north is something invented by map makers so that they can represent our 3D world on a flat sheet of paper.

● Magnetic variation

Vertical grid lines (eastings) on your map are aligned to grid north; therefore, a bearing calculated between two points on your map (using either a protractor or a base-plate compass) will be a **grid bearing**. Since your compass has sworn allegiance to

Figure 2



Once you have an understanding of contour lines and simple map symbols (explained in the map's marginal information) it is possible to work out roughly where you are by orienting your map with the landscape around you. Distinctive peaks make the best landmarks.

magnetic north you can't (unfortunately) dial up a grid bearing on it and set off.

To calculate and allow for magnetic variation you must work out a few formulas and no degree in mathematics is required. Establishing the 'current' magnetic variation for your map entails the following process:

- Look at the magnetic variation diagram to find the variation, in degrees, at the time the map was published
- Use the magnetic variation diagram to find the annual magnetic change and multiply this by the age of the map
- Finally, add up these two figures to get the current magnetic variation for your map

Your location will dictate whether you add or subtract the magnetic variation from the grid bearing you've come up with using your base-plate compass. When the magnetic variation diagram indicates that the variation is to the east, you subtract. When the variation is to the west, you add. A simple way to help you to remember this is to say 'east is least, west is best'.

A range of base-plate compasses with a magnetic variation adjustment function is now available. This feature allows your compass to be 'programmed' with the local grid-to-magnetic variation. If the

compass is set up correctly in the first place you can just dial up a grid bearing and set off. This feature leaves less room for error and speeds up the whole process.

USE OF THE PROTRACTOR

For rucksack sports you should only consider one style of compass, the base-plate. This comprises two items of navigation equipment in one. In the past it was necessary to use a protractor on the map to establish the (grid) bearing between two locations. This bearing was then dialled on a prismatic compass. Gunnar Tillander, a Swede, supposedly came up with the idea of

mark of the compass bezel will now point slightly away from grid north on your map unless the magnetic variation has been 'programmed' into the compass beforehand.)

- 3 Holding the compass in your hand, rotate your body until the magnetic needle aligns with the bezel north mark. The compass base-plate arrow should now point out your direction of travel.

For a more comprehensive explanation of magnetic variation and the '1,2,3' method you should consult a good navigation text.

Now that you have a set of 'how to learn navigation' guidelines the ball is in your

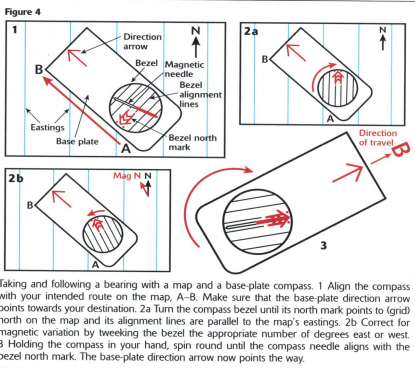


Figure 4
Taking and following a bearing with a map and a base-plate compass. 1 Align the compass with your intended route on the map, A-B. Make sure that the base-plate direction arrow points towards your destination. 2a Turn the compass bezel until its north mark points to (grid) north on the map and its alignment lines are parallel to the map's eastings. 2b Correct for magnetic variation by tweaking the bezel the appropriate number of degrees east or west. 3 Holding the compass in your hand, spin round until the compass needle aligns with the bezel north mark. The base-plate direction arrow now points the way.

combining a compass and a protractor into a single unit in 1928 and thus the modern base-plate compass was born. Once you've mastered it, using the base-plate's protractor feature is child's play.

The use of the base-plate compass is usually taught by the '1,2,3' method. (See Figure 4.) This is the process:

- 1 Place the edge of the base plate along the line on your topographic map between your location and the selected destination. Ensure that the compass direction arrow (not the magnetic needle—ignore it for now) is pointing in the direction of travel (on the map).
- 2a Rotate the bezel so that its north mark (not the needle) points to north on the map and the alignment lines (printed either on the capsule base or on the bezel) run parallel with the eastings (vertical grid lines) on the map.
- 2b Rotate the bezel to add or subtract the magnetic variation as dictated by your map and local conditions. (The north

court. From here it's simply a matter of motivation and attitude. Happy navigating!

RECOMMENDED READING

- Central Mapping Authority, 1994, *Map Reading Handbook*, Land Information Centre, Department of Conservation & Land Management.
- Jacobson, C., 1988, *Basic Essentials of Map and Compass*, ICS Books.
- Kjellstrom, B., 1994, *Be Expert with Map and Compass*, Simon & Schuster.
- Phillips, R. et al., 1989, *Cross Country Navigation*, Outdoor Recreation in Australia.
- Tasmap, 1991, *Map Reading Handbook*, second edition, Department of Environment & Planning.

Hans Fah is a former member of the Australian SAS and is now the owner of a Melbourne-based GPS business. He has navigated his way on foot through many parts of Australia and its neighbouring countries for work and for pleasure.

Lost?

If you suspect that you have wandered off course, stop. It is most important to remain calm because clear, logical thinking is the key to getting back on track. Consider whether

- you have drifted to the left or the right of your desired course.
- you could have overshot your objective (or have inaccurately estimated time and distance travelled).
- the ground covered conformed with the map.
- there are any prominent features that will help you to fix your position.
- localised magnetic anomalies, map or compass errors are to blame. A good worker never blames his or her tools so always leave these possibilities to last.
- you can work out where you went wrong. If you know approximately where you are, take steps to get back to a known location—for example, head west until you intersect a major road running north-south. Try to seek a high vantage point which will give you the best overview of the terrain (but don't get yourself deeper into trouble).
- Lastly, remember to deal with problems of cold, hunger, thirst and morale if you happen to become lost—have a snack, a drink and rug up while you're trying to work out where you are. Don't panic—you'll make it!

A STON HEALING

David Wagland, survivor *extraordinaire*, by Quentin Chester

Mt Frankland National Park

1991

An immense monolith rises above the surrounding karri forest 120 kilometres west of Albany in Western Australia. David Wagland had climbed many times on the granite faces of the State's south-west. However, the visit he made to Mt Frankland in April 1991 was different. Four months earlier Wagland had been involved in a horrific road accident that claimed the lives of his wife Alison and their unborn daughter Claire. David sustained serious injuries and had to undergo an amputation of the lower part of his right leg.

What started out as a gentle walk on crutches around Mt Frankland became a major endeavour. 'Just getting out there on the dome surrounded by all these karri trees and beautiful forest I felt this incredible power and clarity', says Wagland. Spurred on by the elation of the moment he headed for the summit of the mountain and the cliffline below, dragging himself on his backside over the rocks and 'swimming' across moats of heath between the boulders.

'I went hell for leather', he recalls. 'I was keen to know what my limits were, even at that early stage.' The interim plaster prothesis for David's right leg disintegrated. Yet he kept going and with the help of friends who were rockclimbing nearby he was lowered down from the cliff top

so that he could try the last 30 metres of a grade-17 pitch. By using the plaster cast on his broken left foot and hauling on his arms he painfully worked his way back up. 'I just managed to feel the joy of climbing again on the granite and of touching the lichen.'

After three months in hospital it was a liberating reunion. 'When you're grieving intensely your world shrinks and you focus so tightly on yourself. But on that first trip things started expanding again. I had this clarity and being surrounded by the forest—these huge, 100-year-old trees—was incredibly soothing.'

North Adelaide

FEBRUARY 1984

Returning to my Adelaide flat after work on a warm afternoon I was greeted by a sturdily built stranger in my home. Disconcertingly, the stranger was wearing my clothes. It emerged that my brother Jonathan had extended certain hospitalities—including wardrobe borrowing rights—to a visiting friend, David Wagland, who had been with Jonathan on a climbing expedition to Annapurna III in Nepal the year before.

Despite this inauspicious first meeting a friendship developed. The academic interview for which the clothes had been borrowed led to Wagland's return to Adelaide to study engineering geology. My partner Dale and I had just moved house and Wagland helped us out by occupying one of the spare rooms. As

often happens with such arrangements we shared more than just the rent.

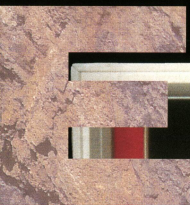
My strongest memories of this year together are of incidental events. A scientist in training, Wagland could be a stickler for detail. Yet his boyish charm and disarming curiosity endeared him to both friends and strangers. When not away on climbing- or study trips Wagland was often in his room writing poems and songs, hand-crafting postcards and strumming his guitar. This natural, restless energy also revealed itself in a peculiar vocal skill. Around the dinner table or at his desk Wagland would occasionally burst into a frantic, Ginger-Baker-style drum solo, his lips and tongue generating a barrage of sound.

As well as this spontaneity, Wagland showed tremendous resolve, whether in pushing himself through personal barriers on a difficult rock-climb or toiling through the night to complete an assignment. I quickly sensed strongly that here was the perfect person to have with you in a difficult situation. He was solid; like a rock.

The Blue Mountains

OCTOBER 1988

Sublime Point is one of those look-outs for which New South Wales's Blue Mountains are renowned. From the top of sheer cliffs you gaze across a breathtaking sweep of space to the valley below. It was here on a breezy Saturday that family and friends



gathered to witness the marriage of David Wagland and Alison Skevington.

Alison, like David, had crossed my path by chance. For a couple of years we worked together taking bookings for treks and adventure holidays in an Adelaide outdoors shop. Unflappable in a crisis, Alison had a steady smile and a wonderful, wry sense of humour. When she moved to Sydney Dale and I suggested she contact David, who we knew had a spare room for rent. We were not entirely surprised when a strong friendship developed between them.

The Blue Mountains setting for their marriage befitted what seemed a very natural partnership. A bit of a dreamer, Alison was an effective foil for David's exuberance and occasional earnestness. Standing on Sublime Point, with the wind rushing and swirling through the she-oaks, I could not help feeling a sense of promise being fulfilled.

Perth

DECEMBER 1990

After a period of travel and change the Waglands were on the brink of a new year and a new phase of their life together. They were expecting their first child and awaiting settlement on their new home. Alison had a job at a local school and David was establishing himself as a consulting geologist. Encouraged by Alison he was also looking forward to a mountaineering expedition in India.

It was two days after Christmas and, as she had done many times before, Alison spent the afternoon with her horse, Blake. On the way home her old Volvo station-wagon broke down. David took a taxi from work to help. Eventually a tow truck was called. David and Alison were riding with the driver in the cab of the truck when the dolly trailer of an oncoming semi broke free from the prime mover and careered into the tow truck, crushing Alison, David and the driver.

Alison and their unborn child died at Royal Perth Hospital. Both David and the tow-truck driver sustained serious injuries. Later that night David underwent a below-knee amputation of his right leg.

Carnarvon Range

JUNE 1991

The bush, in all its guises, had been a vital force in David Wagland's life since childhood. At school and university he took an enthusiastic interest in outdoors clubs, turning his hand to all manner of pursuits from white-water canoeing and cross-country skiing to surfing and hang-gliding.

In the end climbing made the strongest claim on his imagination. He became active

on the Sydney scene making many ascents in the Blue Mountains and beyond. In recent years he had made his mark among the climbing fraternity in WA by pioneering hard routes in various areas throughout the State. The lure of big mountains also induced him to take part in expeditions to New Zealand, the Himalayas and Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic.

And yet the urge to return to the world of crags, high peaks and white water spurred him on. Wagland's experiences in extreme situations on serious climbs—the tenacity needed to succeed and survive—helped him to endure the weeks of convalescence and bouts of depression. 'When you're out on a big, lonely lead it's often all up to yourself and that inner



During the torturous weeks of grief following the accident Wagland had to confront not only the devastating loss of his wife and child but the reality that his physical freedom would be forever impaired. For one accustomed to tackling challenging terrain and elements with such gusto it was an agonising realisation.

strength kept surging through', he says.

Vivid memories of wild places also served as a meditative sanctuary. 'I often placed myself high up in the mountains or out in the desert where it was very pure.' Throughout his recovery Wagland received tremendous support

from his family as well as encouragement from friends and fellow climbers, who often arranged informal slide shows in the hospital ward.

After the visit to Mt Frankland, Wagland was fitted with his first proper artificial limb. In June he travelled to WA's Carnarvon Range with friends. These included mountaineer Tim Macartney-Snape, who had visited Wagland in hospital and had inspired him with slides of this remote desert area. It was a demanding trip. Bush-walking in the rocky, uneven terrain proved to be extremely arduous, particularly returning to camp at dusk when it was hard for Wagland to see where he was placing his feet. The stump of his right leg became badly blistered and on two occasions Macartney-Snape had to carry him back to camp.

For all its frustrations this sojourn was a major step forward in Wagland's emotional recovery. He resumed lead climbing and drew solace from the vastness and spirit of the landscape. 'When you get out there it's just open spaces and crystal-clear, blue skies', he recalls. 'That sense of my universe expanding really accelerated during this trip because I saw myself as being so small in the elements.'

Himachal Pradesh

OCTOBER 1991

Though still coming to terms with his personal loss and his physical disability, Wagland pressed ahead with plans to join an expedition to climb CB 16, a 6000 metre peak in the Indian Himalayas. The accident had taught him the need to live for the moment and to pursue his dreams. This, and the conviction that Alison had always wanted him to do the climb, drove him on.

So in mid-September—barely ten months after the accident—Wagland and three other WA climbers left Perth bound for the Indian mountain township of Manali. Since his outback experiences in June, Wagland had tried to obtain a new, carbon-fibre artificial limb. Unfortunately, this was not available for the trip and he had to make do with



'Wagland, the one-legged, rucksack-sports wonder.' **Far left**, with five-month-old son Nicholas on an overnight bushwalk on Coondiner Creek, Pilbara region, Western Australia.

Near left, ski touring with Nicholas on Mt Stirling, Victoria, a month later. **Kerry Wagland**. **Right**, rockclimbing at Yindibiddi Pool, Mt Newman area, WA. **Andrew Sutton**. **Pages 42 and 43, heading**, **Lucas Trihey**. **Page 43**, Wagland at Royal Perth Hospital after the accident which claimed his leg. **Lorraine Wagland**



the original prosthesis. And he had just recovered from a chipped bone in his accident-weakened left foot, an injury sustained when scrambling up scree at the base of Mt Augustus on his return from the Carnarvon Range back in June.

Climbing the lower slopes of CB 16 was slow going. Moving over unstable ground with a heavy pack proved to be particularly demanding. As the route steepened, however, Wagland found that not only could he keep up but he could contribute to leading on the technical pitches. After a bivouac, all four climbers completed the final 400 metres to reach this previously unclimbed summit. This gave me incredible confidence, both physically and emotionally—there was such a positive feeling that I'd pursued this dream rather than avoiding it', he says. In practical terms the long hours walking on scree and other rough ground also greatly improved his gait and mobility with the artificial limb.

Throughout the climb Wagland had a strong sense of Alison's presence. 'Something was happening internally. I felt her voice urging me on. After the climb I had some very vivid dreams about her.'

Mimbi Caves

NOVEMBER 1991

The southern edge of the Kimberleys in north-western Western Australia is marked by a 200 kilometre long welt of limestone that rises from the limestone in serrated ridges of dark rock. At Mimbi Caves this karst landscape is riddled with underground tunnels and chasms. It was here, wandering alone through a subterranean world, that I found myself overwhelmed by the memory of Alison.

Those were intense hours. My mind seized on a succession of remembered moments—all the times at work when I looked across to her desk to see her hiding behind a travel brochure, helpless with laughter at some absurdity or human foible, usually one of mine. Most of all I remembered seeing Alison

just a few months before the accident, her body already gently curved with the baby she was carrying and her smile full of grace and hope.

The stream of recollections was bitter-sweet. There was the joy of recognition stalked by the painful knowledge that her stubborn tenderness and soft voice—not to mention all that she meant to my friend, her husband—must be forever confined to memory.

When, many months later, I talked about this experience with Wagland he revealed that he'd had several similar encounters. For him they seemed to come out of nowhere and were not linked to any particular location though they tended to occur in the bush or the outback where there was a great sense of space and uncluttered time.

'Often I thought I was being watched, almost looked after and protected. Her smile or look would come back and I've had vivid dreams when I feel like I've had that direct link for some time, a feeling like we've been in a beautiful mountain setting where we've been able to soar away.'

Perth

DECEMBER 1991

Returning from the Kimberley I travelled home by way of Perth and stayed overnight with Wagland. It was impossible not to be impressed by his determination to rebuild his life and by the support of his friends. Nevertheless, it was clear that he was still feeling the effects of the tragedy that happened 11 months ago.

According to the novelist William Faulkner the past is not dead; it is not even the past. 'I like the sense of someone never dying and that you carry on with some of their dreams and ideas', says Wagland. With the passage of time the pain slowly eased; there was less frustration in the fact that remembering was all there was; and more gratitude that the memories could be so radiant.

During my stopover in Perth I also met Kerry Langley, who had become important to Wagland's recovery. An experienced nurse, she understood both the physical and mental aspects of his rehabilitation. She and Wagland found themselves emotionally drawn together, helped by a common interest in the outdoors. 'Kerry's a very good listener', says Wagland, 'and her ability to

perceive the deeper, spiritual side of life was very healing'.

Langley had been with him on many of his early bush outings after the accident, including the visit to Mt Frankland in April. 'Each time we did something I kept seeing this man with incredible strength of character and so much get up and go', she says. 'There wasn't any single trip that marked a breakthrough. Just being in the bush was so natural for us that it allowed David to recover both emotionally and physically.'

A key aspect of his rehabilitation was resuming a variety of outdoors activities. Encouraged by Kerry, David made a return to scuba diving. At first he struggled to maintain balance and control in surging currents. After tracking down a suitable water-sports limb with a hinged ankle, Wagland has made further improvements which have provided him with greater underwater freedom.

However, even with the latest prosthetic technology many physical manoeuvres are still impossible to simulate. When climbing on rock there is not just limited sensitivity but an inability to articulate the artificial foot. Certain moves such as delicate smearing on slabs and low-angled walls, twist-footed jamming and extended toe stretches are almost impossible. Wagland has had to learn to favour his left foot, rely more on upper-body strength and be precise in placing his artificial foot on any available nubbin.

Despite these difficulties he has continued to make significant first ascents, notably in Western Australia. These include the ironically named *Crawling from the Wreckage* (grade 22), a fearsome overhang high on Mt Frankland, and the long route *Morris of Rutherglen* (14) on Mt Augustus. Such achievements are inevitably mixed with frustration. 'At times I have had to clumsily kick and haul my way up rock-faces', says Wagland. 'I have cried in despair knowing how I once would have been able to move easily up similar ground.'

Newman

JULY 1993

The lure of the outback was strong for Wagland. His work as a geologist had taken him to many remote areas and he revelled in the extremes of desert landscapes. In March 1993 he took up a job with BHP in the WA mining town of Newman. Langley accompanied him north and soon found nursing work at the local hospital.

'We were able to make a fresh start together', she says. 'We were surrounded by such beautiful country and the richness of the landscapes provided us with the energy to do that.'

Living in the Pilbara gave Wagland further scope to renew his acquaintance with the bush. He resumed running and took up mountain biking.

'Each time we did something I kept seeing this man with incredible strength of character and so much get up and go...'

Climbing remained a major passion. On overhanging walls he found he was able to pioneer technically difficult routes, his best performance being the climb Sweltering, a three-pitch grade 26. At the same time

man. The Pilbara's wondrous antiquity is written in stone. It's a place of rocky labyrinths and scorched hills strewn with spinifex and vivid, rust-coloured outcrops. 'There's an energy, a kind of spiritual energy, to the place', says Langley.

Their expeditions to the gorges and waterholes were not only emotionally restoring, they also helped to revive Wagland's long-standing idea to work on a book about the region.

Kerry and David were married at a remote outback waterhole in July 1993. They later enjoyed a two-stage honeymoon. The first phase was swagging out under the Milky Way in Western Australia's remote Rudall River National Park. They then travelled to the Cocos Islands where Wagland resumed surfboard riding on the big Indian Ocean reef breaks. 'I was surprised how natural it felt. Like bushwalking, skiing and climbing it was instinctive and rewarding', he recalls.

Adelaide

JUNE 1996

William Faulkner also said that memory believes before knowing remembers. Like memories, dreams take many forms.

Some are baffling glimpses that skip through the mind like stones across the water. A few disappear without trace. But others bounce back from the depths; they gather strength by being shared; they are fleshed out with shape, weight and lustre.

For Wagland, such a dream surfaced on a bright winter's afternoon in Adelaide. It came packaged in the cardboard boxes that he, Kerry and their two young sons Nicholas and Damian had driven across town to collect. That night we all toasted the publication of *Ancient Mountains & Desert Sands*, Wagland's fine book about the Pilbara. In a way we were also celebrating one man's resilience, the affirming power of nature and the two special women who have shared his life.

After the events of that December evening in 1990, David Wagland's life could never be the same. His losses cannot be explained away. Never again will he have quite the same spring in his step or feel the sand between ten toes. Yet he will always have memories to believe in and dreams to share. ●

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in *Wild* no 3) writes regularly about going bush. He is the co-author of *The Outdoors Companion*, *The Kimberley—Horizons of Stone* and is at present working on a book which explores the diversity of 28 Australian islands from the tropics to the sub-Antarctic.



Alison Skevington about a year before her marriage to Wagland. She lost her life and that of the couple's unborn child a little over three years later in the accident that also claimed one of Wagland's legs. **Right**, Wagland met Kerry Langley, who was to become his second wife, while recovering from the accident. *Wagland*

events of the previous two years had fostered a shift in Wagland's outlook.

'Simply being out bush and in nature has become more of a focus', he says. 'I appreciate walking a lot more now. I was never one of those bushwalkers who stopped to admire moss or beautifully coloured lichen. I tended to look at the big picture, the big landscapes.'

'Now I feel more humble and occasionally more vulnerable with things and I appreciate walking for its intricacies and subtleties. Even in other people's back gardens I tend to look at the patterns, textures and colours with a real intensity. When that's translated into the outdoors I do look a lot deeper, perhaps seeing some of the things that Alison once observed.'

Wagland and Langley became increasingly attached to the country around New-



CAMPBELL'S *High Co*



wild bushwalking

untry

A *Wild* special feature



EXPLORING THE CAPITAL

Beautiful and rugged, the mountains to Canberra's west and south continue to attract skiers and bushwalkers as they have done for more than 60 years. *Matthew Higgins reports*

Coree and Gingera, Bimberi and Kelly, Franklin and Scabby: the names of these mountains are well known to outdoors enthusiasts in the national capital but are perhaps less familiar to interstate walkers and skiers. The stone and snow-gum summits of these northernmost peaks of Australia's Alps provide some of the most enjoyable High Country bushwalking there is and the history of skiing in parts of Canberra's mountain hinterland goes back for more than six decades. Incorporating much of the highest terrain in the Australian Capital Territory's Namadgi National Park, the Brindabellas, Bimberi Peak and the Scabby Range form the territory's western and south-western border with New South Wales.

Many visitors to Canberra and, regretably, many Canberrans themselves, look out at the blue ranges that form the backdrop to Australia's capital and say, 'that's the Brindabellas'. The truth is not quite so simple. In fact, the most prominent peak in that south-westerly view from the city is Tidbinbilla, part of a mountain range that far too many fail to distinguish from the quite separate Brindabellas. The Brindabellas is misused not only by the general public but also by officialdom. At a recent function the ACT Minister for the Environment (who has responsibility for Namadgi) told that he was going to officiate at the completion of conservation work at Brayshaws Hut 'up in the Brindabellas'. Brayshaws Hut is in the deep south of Namadgi, many kilometres from the Brindabella Range. Far too often the name is used as a generic holdall for anything vaguely resembling a mountain behind Canberra.

The Brindabellas, which rise near Wee Jasper in NSW, meet the ACT-NSW border at the 1421 metres high Mt Coree; this peak's cliffs of volcanic rock were a significant rockclimbing venue in past decades before Booroomba Rocks (to the south-east and away from the Brindabellas) became the centre of attention for ACT climbers. Southward from Coree the range forms the border and increases in height. Mt Franklin is 1644 metres high and Mt Ginini and Mt Gingera (their flat-topped summit ridge is a distinctive feature of the range) are as high as Victoria's Mts Howitt and Hotham, respectively. Bimberi Peak with its domed top is the highest peak on the border and at 1911 metres is only 317

metres lower than Mt Kosciuszko. From neighbouring Mt Murray the border turns south-east to the Scabby Range and granite-slabbed Mt Scabby from where it turns briefly north-east to the pyramidal summit of Mt Kelly, officially named in early 1915 by border surveyor Harry Mouat, who had been forced back from Bimberi Peak by heavy snowfalls the year before.

One of the noteworthy geomorphological features of the Brindabellas is that despite their gradual rise in altitude towards the south a series of passes through the range share a similar elevation. Stockyard Gap, Blackfellows Gap, Rolling Ground Gap, Leura Gap and Murrays Gap are all around 1500 metres. These gaps make delightful camp-sites. In earlier days they were the routes for bridle tracks used by cattlemen; Murrays Gap is named after TA Murray, who first took stock through to Cooleman Plain (now in Kosciuszko Na-

canberra's high country—the facts

If you are planning a trip to the ACT ranges, camping in the Cotter catchment north of Pyrrys Hut is prohibited, and to the south you need a permit from Namadgi National Park rangers. A separate permit (from ACT rural fire authorities) is required for camp-fires lit outside established fireplaces in the park. Contact Namadgi's Visitor Information Centre on (06) 207 2900. On the NSW side the areas around Bimberi Peak, Mt Scabby and Mt Kelly are nature reserves administered by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service. Call the NPWS's Queanbeyan office on (06) 299 2929.

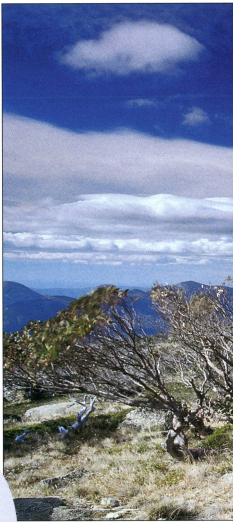
tional Park) in the 1830s. No doubt some of the early graziers' routes followed the foot tracks of the Aborigines who traversed the mountain fastnesses before them. Ex-convict Garrett Cotter, after whom the Cotter River is named, was shown through the mountains by Aborigine Ong Yong in the 1830s.

From either side of the ranges streams drop down into the valleys below. Flowing northward along the eastern flank of the Brindabellas from its source at Mt Scabby is the Cotter River, protected as Canberra's water-supply since 1913 (see Track Notes,

page 55); and on the western (NSW) side is the Goodradigbee. Below Mt Franklin, are Ginini Falls—the highest waterfall in the ACT.

Snow-gum forests run for kilometres along the tops of the ranges and beneath the trees wild flowers put on a show of summer colour. Lower down grow mountain gum, alpine ash and brown barrel, with ribbon gum in the moist gullies and stringybark and scribbly gum in the lower, drier sites. Brown barrel and ash in particular attracted loggers and immediately after the Second World War Bulls Head, which lies between Mts Coree and Franklin, became a centre for hardwood logging. By the early 1960s when logging in the Brindabellas ceased, 47 million super feet (105 750 cubic metres) of timber had been taken for use in housing construction. Meanwhile pine plantations below Mt Coree, outside Namadgi's northern boundary, managed by ACT Forests, continue to provide timber.

In winter, lyre-bird calls ring through the forests. A variety of mammals, from the dusky antechinus, to gliders and red-necked wallabies, can also be seen. The mountain



Brumby Flats recalls the brumby-running days as do the remnant holding yards still to be seen by walkers. Although the 'Man From Snowy River' legend seems to be an all-male affair, women riders also joined in catching wild horses along the ACT ranges earlier this century.

canberra's high country

The mountains of Namadgi seen from the summit of Bimberi Peak. *Martin Chalk*. **Pages 48 and 49**, bushwalkers on Sentry Box Mountain. *Matthew Higgins*

ranges and tell us something about a people whose occupation of the mountains was sadly ended by white settlement and about whom we know too little.

Reminders of the peaks' earlier history are evident in local names. Mt Franklin commemorates the Franklin



beckoning bimberi

Bimberi Peak has long held an attraction for ski-tourers. The peak, only a little lower than Victoria's Mt Bogong, was first climbed on skis in 1932 and since then many other parties have tackled the mountain. While the early skiers had some joy on Bimberi, in subsequent decades many tours there have ended in terrible tangles on densely timbered slopes. Whether the snow has lessened in recent decades or whether regeneration due to changed fire regimes over successive years is the cause, few mountains have offered such widely different experiences.

In August 1932 Bill Gordon and Bedford Osborne made the first ski ascent. Osborne was a local grazier; Gordon, a member of Herbert Schlank's party that had made the first ski crossing from Kiandra to Mt Kosciuszko a few years before, wrote up the Bimberi trip for the 1933 *Ski Year Book*. They walked from Ororral carrying timber skis and heavy packs through falling snow to the mountain's foot in the Cotter valley. Making a shelter out of bushes and lighting a big fire they passed 'a very comfortable night, a much better one, in fact, than many that I have spent in the smoky atmosphere of some of the huts around Kosciuszko'.


Early the next morning they climbed the peak carrying their skis for the first 300 metres or so and skiing from there. They found the snow excellent for skiing (despite a little ice) and at the top the stunted snow gums were half-buried. Gordon reckoned that the run through the timber down to the snowline was as good as that above the Chalet at Charlottes Pass. He was moved to write that Bimberi Peak 'will certainly become a skiing centre in the future'.

Later generations of tourists have not had such a pleasurable time. Nearly all reports have talked of arboreal battles. A good example is the monumental tour of Robin Miller's party from Franklin to Thredbo in 1963 which was reported in the 1964 issue of *Ski Australia*. Here they were at

Mt Franklin the sun shone and snow was thick along the road southward. The skiing was good. But then the party began the climb from the road toward Bimberi Peak.

Abruptly the scrub closed in, and the skiing ceased suddenly to be exhilarating. We took off our skis and immediately sank several feet into the soft snow. We put them on again and soon became entangled in dead logs and branches and a barbed-wire fence. On the northern slopes there were occasional clear areas, where there was no scrub, there were no rocks, no logs, and no barbed-wire fences. And no snow. On the southern slopes there were no occasional clear areas. Here we wallowed in deep snowdrifts, fell over hidden logs, rocks, and heaven knows what, and wondered if we were doing all this 'because it is there'.

'By late afternoon it was obvious we were not going to reach our food depot on the western slopes of Mt Bimberi before dark. So we pitched camp in a small saddle and gloomily thought of the feast we would have had at the depot and the mess of pottage we were going to have instead.'

Such are the vagaries of Bimberi Peak. The mountain still awaits those who are willing to make the trip. 

about them. 'It was a wilderness', reflects Scottish-born Tim Ingram, then a Rover Scout and one of the leading walkers.

Snow did not curtail their activities and 29 members of the group launched 'the Great Bimberi Trip' in June 1932. From their base camp at slab-walled Cotter Hut (built by graziers Thomas and Hannah Oldfield in the 1890s) they reached the gusty summit where, as Allen later wrote, 'snow crystals were stinging our faces. It was encouraging to watch the girls—Midge from WA had never seen snow before and was delighted; Daphne revelled in it.'

The trips were not without drama. During 'the Great Ginini Falls Trip' in October that year Nina Webber carried her foot at the falls and had to be carried on a rough bush stretcher all the way over the range and down to Brindabella Station. That walk would be hard enough without having to carry an incapacitated friend.

One of early Canberra's keenest bushwalking families in the early 1930s were the Cumpstons. Dr JHL Cumpston, Australia's first Director General of Health, led his sons and friends on a number of walks around the southern and western ACT. Probably the most ground breaking was in January 1931 when Cumpston and two of his sons, Alan and Bruce, walked virtually the whole length of the Cotter. The middle part of the river, tightly sandwiched between the

Brindabella and Tidbinbilla Ranges, Cumpston described as 'rugged almost beyond imagination... gloomy, nightmare country, the hills rising almost vertically from the river'. Such was the ruggedness of the banks of the Cotter River that the group spent much of the trip wading down the wild river.

Soon some of these bushwalkers saw the potential of the ranges for snow sports and in 1934 the Canberra Alpine Club was formed. Determined to open up the Brindabellas for skiing, the CAC joined a deputation to the Minister for the Interior to request that a road be built to Mt Franklin. Club president CE Lane-Poole (who as head of the Australian Forestry School helped members to make their own timber skis) told the minister that winter trips along the big range were 'more of the nature of endurance tests than pleasure excursions'.

As the road was pushed ahead by government workers CAC members launched a series of ski tours to find a good site for their lodge. These trips went from Piccadilly Circus south as far as Mt Gingera. Stories from these explorations have become legend, and Tim Ingram recalls how one night the temperature dropped so low in camp that at breakfast the next morning the eggs could not be broken—they were frozen solid! Prospects for skiing in the Brindabellas aroused interest interstate and was being reported in the Sydney and Melbourne press. Mt Franklin was selected as the site for a lodge and the club's Mt Franklin Chalet opened on 2 July 1938. Although no longer in use and locked up for security reasons, the chalet survives today as the oldest club-built ski lodge on the Australian mainland.

These days skiing is divided into the two camps of downhillers and tourers, but before the advent of tows everyone skied with similar bindings and the two forms of skiing were less distinct than they are now. Franklin was developed as a downhill venue and members cut (initially by hand) a series of runs which can still be skied by tourers today in good seasons. Climbing was a matter of using skins, klister or waxes but in the 1950s experimental tows were developed, the first powered by a Harley Davidson motor-bike engine, the second by an Austin A40 car of which the rusting remains can still be seen.

In those days you needed good skiing skills just to get to Franklin. Every member of the club I interviewed had a horror story about the snowed-in Franklin road. Sometimes the club truck (which provided transport in the days before widespread private ownership of cars) got caught back as far as Bulls Head or even further north along the range, leaving skiers no option but to ski 16 or 20 kilometres to the lodge.

From the 1960s the CAC, losing patience with the unreliable snow on the

in the development of Canberra around the time of the opening of the provisional Parliament House in 1927. The increasing population included a group of young men and women new to the High Country who, in the words of Cla Allen who later chronicled their activities, 'were intrigued to see snow on the distant mountains during much of the winter... It was clear that the country was already reasonably well known to surveyors and graziers, but practically unknown to others.'

This adventurous group, numbering up to 50, had already made some significant bushwalks by the mid-1930s. Using gear considered primitive by today's high-tech standards and toting maps poor in detail, these bushwalkers grew intimately to know the Brindabellas and Bimberi and some of the group even walked as far as Tumut and Cooma. At this time there was no road along the Brindabella Range and the mountains had a genuinely primeval feel

Brindabella Range, turned its attention to the expanding Snowy Mountains ski fields. But members like Alan Bagnall kept ski touring alive on the Brindabellas, leading annual trips to the snowy flanks of Mt Gingera. The timber hut built in 1952 as part of the Alpine Botanic Garden and which is now called Pryors Hut was good shelter for the tourers and remains popular today.

The bushwalking exploits of the early 1930s were followed up by later groups. In April 1947 the Canberra Walking and Touring Club was launched with Jack Leslie as president and Bert Bennett as secretary (see the profile of Bert in *Wild* no 59). The club's activities were later

PEAKING AT NAMADGI

...and scaling its heights, by *Martin Chalk*

The western section of the Australian Capital Territory–New South Wales border is defined by the Brindabella Range to the north; the Bimberi Range, and finally the Scabby Range, to the south. On ANZAC Day 1993 Ian Bell and I visited the mountain which gives its name to the southern range—Mt Scabby. Three years later to the day, accompanied by Nick Toozoff, we explored the mountain after which the neighbouring range is named—Bimberi Peak.

300 metres from the valley floor through scrubby, boulder-strewn country sprinkled with character-building regrowth. Coronet Peak's attraction is its commanding position and lower elevation; both let you appreciate the surrounding ranges.

Bimberi Peak can be approached from Canberra in a number of ways. A long drive, a long walk or a combination of both is necessary for each. We chose to concentrate on walking and drove to our starting-point in the Ororral valley. By 7:45 am we were ready to tackle the first day's walking by the now familiar route up to Cotter Gap.

Our course would take us across the centre of Namadgi National Park—a 20 kilometre trek, the last five of which were uphill! A positive frame of mind seemed to be the key to success. During the first hour, always the most difficult for me, the morning was peaceful, with soft light, milky skies, tingling faces and steamy breath, the crunch of boots on a gravel road the only disruption to the mid-week silence. Far off, kangaroos moved through the forest and were caught in our peripheral vision. All was well in this small corner of the world.

As we left the Cotter Hut Road and made for Cotter Gap on the old bridle track, a newly erected sign reminded us that we were entering the Bimberi Wilderness, and were following the Alpine Walking Track (now called Australian Alps Walking Track). I mused on the lack of preparedness of any walker for whom such a sign would provide useful information. I was heartened that it was the last such sign we were to encounter. As we moved along the bridle track Namadgi slowly wove its spell. Cassinias and wattle brushed past our faces and packs. Thornbills darted through the undergrowth while wattle birds and currawongs sung from the trees around. With the approach of Cotter Gap the slope steepened and tingling faces were quickly replaced by pounding hearts and sweaty brows.

The usual breeze met us at Cotter Gap and helped us to cool off. Around the headwaters of Rendezvous Creek the gentians and eyebrights provided a white-and-mauve carpet to break up the green straw colour of the snow grass. What a pleasant surprise to see wild flowers so late in the season!

The journey to Pond Creek Flats and the Cotter valley was rapid and pleasant and gave us our first glimpse of Bimberi Peak's silhouette through the trees. Ian and I remarked on how far we had come and yet how far we still had to go; we looked forward to the task ahead.

After a revitalising break for lunch by the Cotter River we stirred ourselves into life for the hour-long trudge up the Mt Franklin Road—a gravel, park-management track.



Stan Goodhue at historic Mt Franklin Chait in 1991. *Higgins*

subsumed into the CAC but in 1961 Leslie, with Geoff Mosley, re-formed the group and four years later it became the Canberra Bushwalking Club. CBC played a part in the campaign for an ACT National Park and remains very active in the ACT mountains and elsewhere. During the 1950s the CAC itself was Canberra's main walking club; it opened up new routes and gathered experience which was to prove significant. When the recently formed National Parks Association (ACT) wanted to walk into the Mt Kelly area in 1962 it was CAC walks' leader Alan Bagnall who led the group. That trip played a crucial role in the NPA's subsequent campaign for a National Park and led eventually to the formation of Namadgi National Park in 1984, a fitting recognition of the importance of Canberra's beautiful and historic border ranges. 🐾

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As there are only two officially named peaks in Namadgi National Park we thought we had better take a look at the other as well. So Coronet Peak was added to the four-day itinerary.

The three of us had attempted to reach Bimberi Peak some six months earlier by a more circuitous route. On that occasion the mountain's natural defences of remoteness and elevation were too much for us. Nevertheless, each defeat carries the seeds of opportunity: our exit route at that time proved to be an effective reconnaissance for our next attempt.

Bimberi Peak is the highest mountain in the Great Dividing Range north of Mt Jagungal and is only 317 metres lower than Mt Kosciusko. It rises some 900 metres from the valley floor and dominates both the south-western corner of Namadgi National Park and the Currango Plains region of Kosciusko National Park. From its summit, Tabletop Mountain, Mt Jagungal and the Main Range can be seen to the south; Black Mountain Tower and Canberra to the north; the Bogong Range to the west and all Namadgi lies at your feet. The prospect of these views was sufficient reason for another crack at what could be regarded as Namadgi's most elusive peak.

In contrast, at 1494 metres Coronet Peak is comparatively small. However, it rises

The purist bushwalker might say that using park tracks and the like is not in the spirit of bushwalking. However, I hold the view that one should use the best available travel aids which accord with the purpose of the exercise. We had a lot of kilometres to cover and metres to climb in a single day and a bush bash would not have helped.

An hour later and three hundred metres higher we stopped to look for the old, disused bush track which according to the map would lead us south along the East Face of Bimber Peak to a point almost directly below the summit. We eventually found a foot-pad, subtly marked by a small cairn. As I headed in the direction we wished to go, we tentatively followed the pad; it eventually ran into a thicket of saplings which contrasted with the surrounding mountain gum forest. After a day of walking on tracks, this sudden transition to bush navigation jolted me—I now had to think and analyse!

After a further 90 minutes we had climbed to an elevation of 1600 metres and had reached the point where the bush track was supposed to end although by this time its route was purely speculative. More importantly, we had had enough for the day. Long shadows and weary legs said it all: despite our proximity to the summit it was time to stop. A quick search for water confirmed our suspicions that a dry camp was to be the order of the evening. With nothing but a ration of boiled rice and a cup of water we were in bed by 6:30 pm. As I finished my notes for the day I heard the sounds of slumber droning steadily from Ian's tent.

ANZAC Day dawned clear and cool, the only relief in the grey, predawn sky being the orange tinge of the tree-studded eastern horizon. The wind—which had torn at the treetops all night—continued with a strength only slightly reduced. We quickly packed our gear. We each had a mouthful of water and a barley sugar for a shot of energy and made for what we hoped would be a water-filled soak atop Bimber Peak and a proper breakfast.

The climb through the snow gums was surprisingly painless considering the length of our previous day's efforts. With every step the receding horizon and thinning trees gave us steadily improving views across the Cotter valley towards Cotter Gap—how insignificant the previous day's walk now seemed.

After 200 metres of climbing the slope eased and the snow gums gave way to typical high-alpine vegetation. Wind-raked and stunted trees, alpine mint bush and snow grass, big skies with rapidly moving clouds all proclaimed our proximity to a special alpine summit. The final 100 metre climb was through some of the country which I hold dearest. As the Bimber Peak trig station came into view our pace quickened, all thoughts of breakfast temporarily dismissed.

It didn't take long to come to terms with our new environment. A strong, cold wind made us rapidly don all our warm clothing. The air flowing over the mountain range

formed standing waves in the atmosphere marked by slivers of thin, white cloud to the south-east. Occasionally a cloud moved across the sun causing the temperature to drop still further. What a place! I just can't get enough of it.

Ian wondered what the summit would look like when snow covered the ground. We were disappointed about how difficult it is to experience such a thing yet grateful that easy access to this fragile place is denied. The talk of 'ecotourism' and the 'development of natural resources' for all to enjoy does not ring true in places such as this. I think it axiomatic that places once free for everyone will change when a fee is charged to visit them. Any change—'improvement', 'development'; call it what you will—to places of natural beauty can only detract from their value.

Enough of these depressing thoughts; of the plans of ambitious politicians and developers that sully the wilderness experience. I come up here to worship at the altar of isolation. As Ian and Nick went to find the soak I got behind my camera for some communion with nature.

Half a roll of film later they returned with news that the soak was dry. Luckily they had found a small rock-pool and scooped up sufficient water for a brew or two and for the walk down the mountain. We were amazed that the sleet and snow which fell in and around Canberra the previous week seemed not to have left a liquid legacy up here.

With stoves roaring and the trig station drumming in the wind we settled in the lee of the summit rocks for a welcome breakfast. A wedge-tailed eagle rising on the updraughts seemed to have the same thing on its mind.

After two hours we reluctantly said goodbye to this alpine retreat and set off on the one-hour descent to Murrays Gap. The foot pad came and went but was easy to follow. Clearly this route was more popular than the one we had selected for our ascent. As the gnarled alpine snow gums gave way to their lower-altitude cousins and they, in turn, to mountain gums I was reminded of a high-school biology lesson about the succession of species. My teachers had indeed been preparing me for later life.

At Murrays Gap we found the substantial soak also to be dry. Of more importance was the five kilometre walk down the Murray Gap Fire Track to the Cotter valley; we'd expected it to be tedious but we'd had no idea how frustrating and annoying the last two, steep kilometres would be. With toes squashed into the front of boots and calf muscles crying out for a rest we eventually gave the road away and struck out across country for the last kilometre to the Cotter River.

Once established on its eastern bank, the three of us cooled our punished feet in the icy water and ate a late lunch. With some three hours of daylight remaining, we decided to aim for the flat, forested area below the western side of Coronet Peak—next to Licking Hole Creek—and make

camp in preparation for the next day's climb.

Although it was only a short distance from the Cotter River, getting to our campsite required a bit of scrambling through head-high scrub. The contrast between that and our experiences just a few hours earlier was remarkable.

This time our campsite had running water! Not just a creek but a tree- and wattle-lined stream which bubbled over smooth river rocks and promised a relaxing serenade for our second night. With tents up and tea on, we spoke about the difference a day could make. A calm, clear, moonlit night among the scattered trees created the perfect atmosphere for those meaningful discussions held around many a campfire.

With most of the world's problems solved yet again, we retired for the night. I drifted off to sleep to the sounds of pigs or wombats making their evening rounds against the background of running water.

Despite the pleasant surroundings and ample water none of us slept particularly well. The sinking of cold air into the hollow in which we were camped and the hard ground took their toll. Friday dawned calm and icy. Tent interiors wet with condensation and sleeping-bags similarly damp set the agenda for pre-departure chores—would the sun never crest the ridge?

Later, with dry gear, full stomachs and flexed muscles we set off to claim Coronet Peak. The western side of Coronet Peak is dry and scrubby and now that the sun had risen we found it unpleasantly warm. Fortunately, our early start allowed us to move into the peak's shadow quite quickly and this made the scramble to the top a little more tolerable. The presence of boulders and scrub turned this ascent into something more like off-track 'walking' than our experiences on the two preceding days.

Upon gaining the top of the ridge all that remained to be done to reach the peak itself was to traverse a kilometre of gradually rising ground. We hoped this would be easy. Alas, Namadgi had its own ideas. The ridgetop was an array of truck-sized boulders and regrowth from an old bushfire. Unlike the country on the next ridge to the east, this was at least passable but it put paid to our hopes of a leisurely dawdle. With slow progress and diversions aplenty we gradually closed the gap to the summit.

As lunch-time neared so did the rocky outcrop of Coronet Peak. Once again food took second place as we dropped our packs and crawled up the cracks in the rock to the peak proper.

Warm sunshine and a cool breeze dried our sweaty shirts while our eyes feasted on a panorama which I feel is one of the best in Namadgi. High enough to see the extent of the Scabby, Bimber and Brindabella Ranges but low enough to feel their power, this place seems special to me. Difficult to reach and yet ready to reward those who do, it balances nature's prominence with the human will to achieve.

Such was the attraction of Coronet Peak that we decided to spend a couple of hours

there just enjoying the simple pleasures it had to offer. While Nick disappeared to do some bouldering, Ian and I quietly sat in the shade and let the skinks and birds resume their scurrying. As the afternoon drew on we reluctantly followed the sun down the north-western side of Coronet Peak towards Pond Creek Flats and our last night's campsite.

The north side of Coronet Peak had some horrid stretches of cassinias and wattle—we had never been so glad to be going down instead of up. In this last hour of the day the park bestowed upon us the entire complement of cuts, bruises and bumpy shins that we were to receive during the entire four-day outing. When we had reached the flats, Coronet Peak towered over us.

Once again we camped and dined with an ample supply of water at hand. A mild, calm and clear night prompted us to continue our heady task of problem solving around the campfire. But as we didn't take notes our solutions were allowed to drift into the night thus leaving similar pleasures to the next group of travellers. Apart from the crone-like cackle of a pair of yellow-bellied gliders feeding in the trees above our tents the night passed uneventfully.

The black interior of my tent slowly turned to grey. Was dawn here already or could I have a little more time in bed? My hope for the latter, reinforced by the still-present night call of a distant boobook, was shattered by a kookaburra. Needless to say, the rest of the avian kingdom quickly followed its lead and any hope of another hour in the sack receded with the night. With a flurry of zips, I stuck my head into this tuneless world to greet a perfect day. Calm, clear and fresh: still grass and stately gums capped by a pale-blue sky of vapour-trail ribbons.

Slowly we emerged; no rush to begin the end of our journey. Breakfast was leisurely as we allowed the creeping rays of sunlight to dry and air our tents and sleeping-bags—one less chore to do at home! After due preparation we set off to retrace our steps to Cotter Gap and our car.

As we walked to the gap the silence—broken only by the soft rhythm of footfalls and the beating of my heart—allowed me time to reflect on the last three days. I gave thanks for both the physical and mental ability to enjoy country such as we had just experienced and for the desire to do so. As I stole one last look through the trees at Bimberi Peak I saw its bulk capped by billowing, black clouds. Maybe this was good time to go home after all... ■

Martin Chalk, who also wrote 'More Capital Walking' (the Track Notes) starting on this page, is an Air Force navigator who first admired the rugged parts of Australia's Great Dividing Range from the cockpit of an F-111. These days he takes things more slowly, walking and skiing in the High Country.

MORE CAPITAL WALKING

A Namadgi classic, by *Martin Chalk*

This article describes a three-day walk in the Australian Capital Territory's Namadgi National Park. (Another walk in this region was described in *Track Notes*, Wild no 54.) Namadgi covers 45 per cent of the Territory and has a history of human habitation dating back many thousands of

flats of Cotter Gap. Finally, it leaves the wilderness by an overland trek to the Ororral valley.

● When to go

Spring and autumn usually have the most comfortable weather conditions for walking in this region and you avoid the rain and



Flower power: battling the scrub around Corin Dam. *Chalk*

years. Signs of occupation by Aborigines and early European settlers are still evident to those who wish to look for them. However, only bushwalkers and members of the animal kingdom are seen in the Namadgi region now.

The park contains a variety of vegetation and terrain—wet and dry sclerophyll montane forests, grassy valleys, windswept alpine peaks and rocky tors. To the south and west the park is bordered by Kosciuszko National Park and the Scabby Range and Bimberi Nature Reserves of New South Wales. To the east and north lie rural properties and plantation pine forests.

The walk described in this article goes through a region which was opened up by the Cotter family during the 19th century. It starts at the wall of Corin Dam and runs along the western side of the catchment into the Cotter River valley. It then continues to Cotter Flats in the heart of Namadgi—an area called the Bimberi Wilderness—before heading east to the attractive frost

snow of winter and the fire hazards of summer.

● Maps

The best maps are the NSW Central Mapping Authority 1:25 000 issues *Corin Dam* and *Rendezvous Creek*. Both maps are required for this walk but neither shows any foot tracks.

● Permits

This walk entails camping in the catchment of the Cotter River and permits are required. They are available for small groups only and can be obtained from the Namadgi National Park ranger by phoning (06) 237 5222, or fax (06) 237 5105. You have to provide the grid reference of your intended camp-site(s) and an overview of your intended route and the number of people in the party.

For all open fires but not for fuel-stoves fire permits are needed. For those still using open fires, you get permits from the ACT Rural Fire Service by phoning (06) 207 8603, or fax (06) 207 8622. When you apply for a fire permit you have to quote the name of the Namadgi ranger who authorised the camping permit, the grid reference and date/time of each intended fire.

● Access

The starting-point of the walk, Corin Dam, is the first of three water-supply dams on the Cotter River. Access is along the sealed Corin Road which goes west from its junction with the Tidbinbilla Road approximately 12 kilometres north of the hamlet of Tharwa. The Tidbinbilla Road runs between the Cotter Reserve to the north and Tharwa to the south, both of which can readily be reached from Canberra by way of tourist route number five. (Note that the Tidbinbilla Road is called Paddys River Road north of the intersection with Corin Road.)

The Corin Road climbs west from the junction through pine and eucalyptus forests over Smokers Gap and then descends to the dam wall. The descent is not steep but watch out for icy patches in winter and on cool mornings throughout the year.

As this is a through walk, a short car shuttle is necessary. The exit is in the Orroral valley at the locked gate at the end of the sealed Orroral Road. You should allow about 45 minutes to travel between Corin Dam and the Orroral valley.

The Orroral Road was built in the 1960s for access by NASA to the tracking station in the Orroral valley. It can be

reached from Canberra through Tharwa and the Boboyan Road which runs south towards Adaminaby. (Be warned that there are no petrol- or other services between Tharwa and Adaminaby.)

After Tharwa the road follows a broad valley to the farming region of Naas. Continue past Naas over Fitzs Hill until the junction with the Orroral Road is reached some 50 kilometres south of Canberra.

Proceed along the Orroral Road, through the entrance to Namadgi National Park and on to the locked gate. At the gate is a small car-park from which the foundations of the tracking station can be seen to the north-east. For those with the time and the interest, there is a self-guided walk through the tracking station site which gives an informative overview of the NASA operations which were conducted there.

The Orroral Road and thence Corin Dam can also be reached from the south by way of Adaminaby and Shannons Flat. Most of the Boboyan Road in this direction is unsealed. However, this may be a better option than driving into Canberra along the Monaro Highway for those who plan to approach the region from the south.

● The walk

The walk starts in a southerly direction at the western end of the Corin Dam wall and follows the bank of the catchment. Take the short dirt road along the sluice-way to the fence at the end. Once over the fence a foot-pad makes you expect an easy walk. During this early phase of the trip only stout boots, good balance and ten centimetres of track keep you from an unsheduled bath in the dam's cool water. The



The flying fox across the Cotter River. Chalk

ground underfoot is quite loose and when combined with the thickening scrub and apparent evaporation of the foot-pad, any hopes of an easy day quickly slip away.

A number of creeks and watercourses must be crossed as you move along the edge of the reservoir. If you follow the remains of the foot-pad the first of these is difficult due to the steep terrain and thick scrub. A better option is to stay well above the water's edge and cross the creek some

into the water from the right, thus marking the end of the day's bush bashing. We reached this point after four hours of walking and two hours of resting. Admittedly, my walking partner Ian and I were below our best fitness but our companion, 'young Nick', also knew that he had just put in a hard day!

The track now leads south towards the unforded part of the Cotter valley. At Gallipoli Flats, about 1.5 kilometres from where the track enters the catchment, a well-maintained flying fox is rigged across the river and provides an interesting diversion—as well as an excuse to rest your feet!

We had originally intended to find a camp-site somewhere on the grassy plain which once constituted the Cotter family's rural lease—about seven kilometres south of the flying fox. However, aching bodies and failing light dictated a popular amendment to our plans, so we stopped at a small, grassy flat near the junction of the Cotter River and De Salis Creek. There are many such spots on the banks of the Cotter River; but be sure that you comply with the camping-permit condition which prohibits camping within 500 metres of the river.

● Day two

The first objective of the second day is the Cotter House. The house was once the residence of the Cotter family but is now used as an outstation by park rangers; consequently it is locked. However, in this peaceful and remote setting is a delightful mix of rural buildings and old, giant pines as well as grassy pasture and snow-gum forest—it is well worth a visit. To reach it, head along the Cotter Hut Road (a park management road) which the bush track mentioned above intersects about one kilometre south of the camp-site. You should allow about an hour for the journey from the camp-site.

From the Cotter House we had two options. The ACT's highest peak, Bimberi Peak, beckoned. It is about eight kilometres by track to the west of—and one kilometre above—the house. Although the peak could be done as a side-trip, it would make for a demanding day followed by a long third day to walk to the car. Given our condition after the previous day's hammering in the scrub, we were careful not to confuse ambition with capabilities. We decided to leave Bimberi Peak for another time and took the easier option—a two-day walk back to the car.

From the house continue along the Cotter Hut Road to the ford across the Cotter River (about 50 metres from the house). At this point the river is usually knee-deep and about ten metres wide and provides an opportunity to cool your feet—a mixed blessing in winter.

Once across and dried off, proceed north-east along an old track towards Cotter Flats. Shortly after the ford the track leaves the cover of the trees and slowly climbs above the valley floor where there is

a good view of the grassy plain and the Brindabella Range beyond. Off to the left you can see the site of the original Cotter Hut before it was moved across the river to its present site. All that is left to mark its former location are a poplar tree, some flat ground and the remains of the hut's foundations.

After Cotter Flats the track continues up the valley formed by Pond Creek to Pond Creek Flats. Walking is easy on this old bush track and the rolling terrain, open forest and occasional clearing make a welcome contrast to the previous day. Your departure from Pond Creek Flats is indicated by the well-defined crossing of Pond Creek. At this point the track is no longer marked on the map and the terrain rises steeply. If the day is warm you certainly would be well advised to fill your water-bottles at the creek as this will be your last opportunity to obtain water for about an hour.

The track on to Cotter Gap is quite clearly defined but is steep in places. It stays about 50 to 100 metres above and to the south of Pond Creek and walking can be uncomfortably warm on a sunny afternoon when the sun strikes your back. Once at Cotter Gap the track swings to the south-east and enters a clearing after about 500 metres and a slight descent.

From here the walk to the car park will take about two hours and is on tracks all the way. Therefore you may wish to continue to the walk's end that night. However, if you want to take it easy spend the afternoon and evening resting in this frost flat and, weather permitting, sleep out with its native inhabitants. There are plenty of opportunities for photography, bouldering, bird-watching and snoozing. Also, from here the granite tors of Cotter Rocks are only 30 to 45 minutes away and these provide excellent views (see Track Notes, *Wild* no 54). Suitable camp-sites for three or four small tents are on the edge of the clearing at grid reference 704558.

● Day three

From the camp-site head north-east to the low saddle at grid reference 705562. If you keep to the right as you ascend to the saddle you will eventually get to a well-worn foot track. This is the continuation of the bush track you followed to Cotter Gap the day before and is the route home. You should take some time to find this track and not be tempted to push on through untracked bush as it will mean the difference between a very short and a very long journey back to the car park.

The track initially descends steeply from the frost hollow but quickly eases to a steady descent towards Orrorral. It crosses one watercourse, so there is no need to carry much water from the camp-site. The eastern end of the Cotter Hut Road will be reached after an hour.

Follow this road to the right and it will lead you downhill towards the Orrorral valley. After a further hour of walking the locked gate will come into view along with your car. ●

the walk at a glance

GRADE Medium

LENGTH Two–three days

TYPE River valley and subalpine forest

REGION ACT

BEST TIME

Spring or autumn

SPECIAL POINTS

Historical features. Camping- and fire-permits required

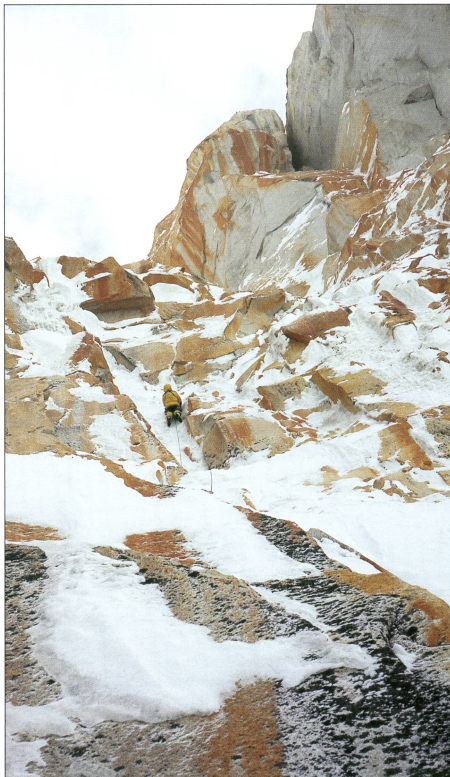
metres upstream. The second crossing is just as difficult. However, this creek is more substantial and is a welcome, shady rest-spot in a cool pocket of ferns and moss-covered trees.

After about three kilometres (and three hours' walking) you will reach a small beach which is an excellent place for lunch and a well-earned rest. As Corin Dam is part of Canberra's water-supply system, you should respect the cleanliness of the water and employ 'minimum impact' techniques when considering your dining options—no scraps, no buried waste, absolutely no rubbish!

After the beach the terrain is generally less steep, which allows your hips to share the load evenly. However, there is no respite from the scrub. Once past the creek which flows into the dam from Hanging Flat, the terrain steepens again for a few hundred metres. Although the map suggests that the water frontage is quite flat, the scrub is impenetrable and overhangs the water.

Your only hope is to move into the steeper country further up the slope. About 50 metres above the water there is a small wallaby track which at least offers stable footing—even if you can't see your feet!

Finally, some six kilometres from the dam wall the catchment becomes noticeably narrower and a substantial bush track (called Lick Hole Road on older maps) runs



To pass through pain and not know it,
A car door slamming in the night.
To emerge on an invisible terrain.

from *A Wave*, by John Ashbery

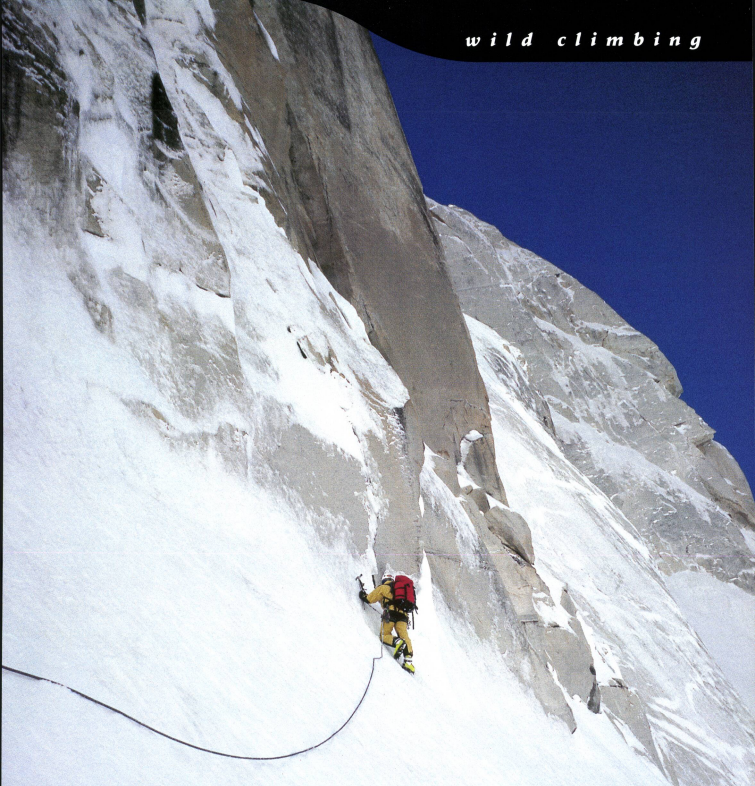
It is really very difficult to let a mountain just be in your mind—we always have to create reasons, distinctions, appropriations. Thalay Sagar's North Face is an immense alpine objective—1600 metres of very steep, technical climbing in the heart of the Indian Himalayas. And no one has touched the final 400–500 metres of it. Sitting here at home I still can't fathom the dimensions of time and space; all the sorties in bad weather; the retreats; the huge loads of technical gear and food; the savage, cold days; and the frightening dreams, waking up at 3 am and realising that you really are in the middle of it.

My tools had turned to rifles as I woke from a daze-like dream on a belay—visions of scratchy, black-and-white photographs with black-booted soldiers shunting tanks and supplies back through the snow during the Russian winter of the Second World War. Ath was up at our high point swinging blow after blow into the face; my eyes played dotted-white-line games with the familiar sight of falling ice and snow tearing past the belay as though we were racing along a highway. I'd managed to crouch into a small corner while I watched Ath, bowling ball ice hurtling its way towards my body. Then I thought it wasn't actually going for me; it was kamikaze, obliterating itself on some granite a metre or so above my head. Hours go past and one is *still* in fast forward...

We arrived at Base Camp on 9 September, and after two weeks we'd established our assault camp (consisting of a lightweight tent and a snow-cave) at 5550 metres and were fixing rope up the side of the initial rock buttress. Conditions were ugly enough although there was nothing really surprising—half to three-quarters of a metre of loose snow over hard ice. Leading a pitch felt like drowning in the butterfly race back in school. Panting, covered in powder, you'd try to remember whether you really did put your crampons on that morning, so patient had you to be to get your points in.

Left, Athol Whimp forges a way up the face leading to the crucial mid-section of the route, the key to reaching the shale headwall. **Right,** Whimp at the start of the steeper climbing on the route. Andrew Lindblade





An attempt on one of the most demanding walls
in the Himalayas, by *Andrew Lindblade*

GIVEN

Old fixed-line rose from the ice to the rock walls as though mooring down some sunken galleon. Never did trust feel so tenuous. We looted all the pins and biners, and moved upward.

After the first day above Camp One we had rope down from the worst of the initial slopes. There was so much snow—all lying over hard ice—that, surely, there was no way it would avalanche; it was just too big...

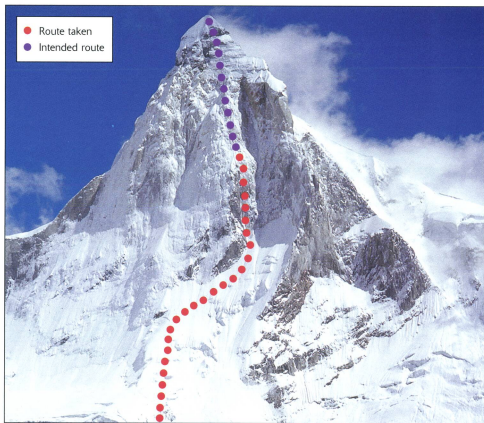
US climbers Jay Smith and Kitty Calhoun were attempting the North Face by a different route. Kitty had been high on this route ten years before and spent eight days sitting out a storm on a Porta-ledge before escaping the face. Their friends Steve Gerbeding and Scott Backes were thwarted by Steve's ongoing illness. He looked like a walking rake.

September—snow on all but three days. The downward-spiralling temperatures keep eating away at you. Clear mornings, cold as on a beach at dawn when you feel the chill just above the water. Then, after a well-orchestrated development, the monsoon loses itself and crashes into the face as though piloted by someone asleep. The snow collects up high and pours down the mountain in massive spindrift avalanches, forcing you to breathe as though you're under a cold shower. If you could dig in you would.

After several days of carrying gear up and fixing rope we established a second camp at 6150 metres, at the base of a broad gully where the really steep stuff starts. It was the only place for it, and it was right in the fall line from above. All night small pieces of ice rained on the tent, the occasional piece piercing the fabric. I wanted to put my helmet on whenever I saw it lying in the mess but it was far easier to fall asleep. Sporadically we lost ourselves in conversations that were detached from the mountain—our minds easing themselves

into an evening of short sentences about home. Voice recorders would have detected a nervous stammer when the big showers of ice rained down. We had a cache of gear across and up in a relatively small subgully. This had to be fetched and shifted into the main gully to allow us to get higher.

work up enough saliva to eat a chocolate bar. I lead up and across into the main gully line. The ice is good; but one always waits for the sting in the tail. The pitch ends with a ten metre traverse. I'm anchored just high enough above the final piece of protection for Ath to Jumar safely. As he unclips the last piece I see an uncertain gaze, then



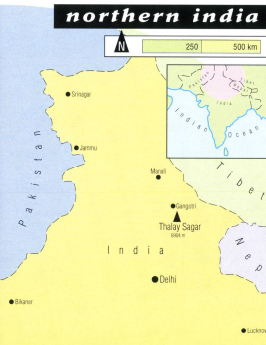
Morning was always clear ('What a day! What a day!'). We could look down and across the glacier to the sun on the three Jogan peaks. The memory of the sun is painful when you live in permanent shade. Memories of simpler climbing are even more so. Following some porridge and a big brew of coffee with mixed bits from last night's meal, we mobilise and climb across to the fixed rope which leads to our cache, and begin to Jumar to our high point. Ath leads off the belay, stoically hunting the right line down to get across and up to the main gully. The steepness causes him to lean far back—I imagine his spine arching. He runs about 80 metres out and yells, safe. The usual, ruthless pulling down of the belay follows. I hang off my tools; shoulder the pack; weight the Jumars; swing into the line; pant; slot the tools away (this always causes a neck seizure)—and begin to head up. Remove the gear: wires, the odd screw. The second always notices the absurdity of some of the protection on alpine terrain but while one is leading things are moving faster; you've got the thin end of the wedge.

By midday we are very dry. It's hard to

The awesome, 2000 metre North Face of Thalay Sagar, showing the line of the route attempted. **Right**, the author slumped on the rope high on the route in a brief moment of sunshine. *Athol Whim*

methodical genius. His steps become strangely angled, crampons used ballet-like, and the potentially ugly swing becomes a deliberate approach as though through a minefield. At the belay I hand Ath the rack. He cuts it down and heads off up a vertical pillar of shattered water-ice. I can tell things aren't so great; many dead whacks on granite under spindrift showers. I wait. The rope is going up; then down. I crane up my neck and Ath is back in the picture—now on ice not quite as steep. The rope drifts through my figure of eight, my gloved hands slowly become colder. By mid-afternoon the weather has begun to self-destruct. The falling snow is light enough to blow up your nose and the spindrift avalanches begin to cascade down the wall. Sound becomes enclosed as in a sea shell. The waves roll down. I imagine Ath up there, dreaming of surfing.

He calls down from what I think is the end of the pitch. Inaudible. Another yell is cast down. Dog-like, my ears prick up. I start jumaring. The weight of the second's pack is horrific and although advocates of



the lightweight we carry it anyway—'we need this arsenal for the headwall'. As I am weighting my leg sling halfway up the shattered pillar everything suddenly feels as though it is dropping away. My head crashes into the wall, followed by my knees—spindrift is pouring down the back of my neck, my arms are straining on the jumars. Panic about a failed anchor or broken rope subsides as I realise that only the foot sling has worn through against the crampon rail. I retie the sling, and press on to the belay.

We hang the pack on the belay and pause to eat chocolate. We know we're not drinking enough. After a short while Ath racks up and heads off. I watch carefully during the steepest section as he torques his axe in a crack and levers himself up; swinging his other ice-tool high above his head; craving some more plastic ice but not getting any; panting like a wretched dog. The spindrift begins again, and now he is out of sight round the side of a buttress. As the snow races down, the rope doesn't move. Ten minutes pass. Suddenly he moves again—faster now. We are climbing on a thin, 100 metre rope. Yet as the rope nears its end, there isn't enough. Ath is up there frantically searching for an anchor in cruddy ice and not enough rock, the spindrift blasting down at random. I climb up as high as I can on the belay when he yells down, 'one more metre'. I try to hold the rope from him briefly so that he won't go off belay, but he yells again, 'one more metre', so I hesitantly let the rope pull through the figure of eight, experience telling me that I'm crazy to let Ath off belay on such steep terrain. Then I hear a tinkle, dwindling below me: panic mounts as my mind races to think what I've dropped. Looking down at my harness, a karabiner hangs there on its own—the figure of eight plummeted away when the rope went through. 'Back to the Italian hitch', I mumble with a surge of anger.

Finally I hear 'safe' from above. I yell out for Ath to abseil back to the belay (two packs are down here and both need to go up) before I Jumar as I need his weight to stretch the rope sufficiently to bring the now free end back to the belay. The temperature has dropped markedly during the afternoon and I begin to shiver. Ath looks drained when he arrives. We have two hours until dark and nowhere to bivvy. We have to get the cooker going to drink, but this is impossible with the constant stream of avalanches.

For an hour and a half we agonise about what to do, much of this in dreamy silence as the spindrift waves roll down. The weight and scale of our climb really begin to make their impact. Our emotions are chaotic about descending after having reached this height,

'Ath is up there frantically searching for an anchor in cruddy ice and not enough rock, the spindrift blasting down at random.'



ready to make it on to the crucial mid-section. The effort it takes to return to a high point on a big mountain is huge, especially when conditions are fast becoming absurd. The freezing evening rapidly takes hold. We lash all the technical gear and food to the belay and abseil, hoping to be back in a few days.

We reach the snow slope at 6 pm, just before dark, without a rope. All the ropes are fixed above us up to our high point, so that we can eventually jumal back there. Some fixed ropes are still around the toe of the buttress, but we have to descend a fair way to reach them. We exchange a few words to make sure we're both feeling okay, and head off. Conditions are grim—more loose snow over hard ice, -30°C, and steep enough to make self-arrest unlikely should one of us fall. I stop to put on the headtorch and clean up the slings that have accumulated on my harness and shoulders.

I cast my eyes down and see Ath rhythmically descending in the dark, the

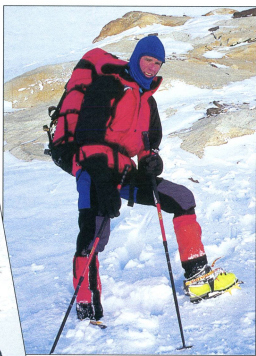
g u y s o k a y...? Ath replies in a yell that fades with tiredness: 'Y e s...'. His breathing becomes stertorous... I'm so wasted that I can barely open my mouth.

'Good job', replies Kitty.

'Only halfway', Ath echoes back.

'That's a good job...'

Ten metres from Camp One I stop to rest again. As I watch Ath stumble on to the ledge, I think it's easier to stay right where I am. The dim glow of his headtorch blurs before my eyes. I hear the clank of the cooker as Ath knocks something against it. This gets me going again.



Above, the author 'enjoying -30°C' on the final descent to Base Camp. **Whimp**, Left, Whimp below the North Face of Thalay Sagar. **Lindblade**



buttress looming overhead. When I reach him at the toe of the buttress and start of the fixed line, I give him light so that he can rig his headtorch, and we continue. Eventually we abseil to the end of the fixed line and start the last leg to Camp One. We slump over and rest in the snow every 50 metres. The darkness presses a strange loneliness on to me that I haven't felt before; it bonds me more closely to Ath. About 20 minutes from Camp One the angle eases and we can face outwards. The temptation to glissade is halted by the hidden slots and seracs.

Out of the dark we hear echoes from below. We recognise Kitty's voice stretching up to us from their first camp: 'A r e y o u

The next morning we wait for the sun at midday before getting out of our sleeping-bags. Outside I pull my socks off to inspect my feet.

They'd been frozen for three days, and even at night in the tent I'd been unable to warm them up. Black and blue stains the two biggest toes on my left foot and all my toes and the balls of the feet are frozen and blanched stark white. We don't say much.

The next night we head back to Base Camp. Stumbling down the glacier I feel my feet warming up, but the ends turn spongy and numb. Ath has dead tips on his toes, fortunately nothing serious. As soon as possible I see the doctor from the Czech Brigrupanth expedition. After much careful tapping, prodding, and deliberation with his mallet, he clears his throat and says: 'I zink zeeze vill be orkay...take zeeze drug.' Circulation has returned in the tips. A month later there is still much nerve damage and no feeling. But it'll come back. It's a wickedly fine line.

The beginning of October brought a series of storms and the change of seasons. We were moving into an early winter. The morning after we'd spoken to Kitty she and Jay headed up for their final summit push. Several days of storm, the cold, and constant spindrift avalanches forced them down. At 10 pm on the descent, they were abseiling off the end of their fixed line when a massive avalanche started. As Ath says, they were fish on the end of the line. We met them the next day just below Camp One, standing on acres of avalanche debris.

'That thing was huge', they tell us. But the gaps between the words say so much more. We all stare up at the face, and feel as though we'd been at war. We smile sick smiles. By the looks of them Kitty and Jay could have been on a raft at sea for six months. They warn us about the conditions: anything that hasn't gone is about to. We make plans for the party in Base Camp before heading up the mountain once again. Camp One has been buried in two metres of snow by the avalanche. We are plugging up the apex of the slope just below the camp when the whole thing settles—'WHUMPH!' Shock drains the blood from our heads. Alter direction, undo packs, hands out of wrist loops, wait for the turmoil. A minute later: 'WHUMPH!' Then silence. As though nothing has happened, nothing has changed. But our pulses race as we feel the weight of slope crackle underfoot. We tiptoe upwards.

Another 20 metres and the surface is packed hard; we scamper across to Camp One. Eventually we dig out our snow-cave and resurrect the tent. In the morning we pack up in horrific cold and descend. Down on the glacier we load up our packs with some stashed equipment and shunt out to Base Camp.

The Americans have us on a coffee drip for the next couple of days (we ran out) as we pack up and talk of the mountain, of our homes, of rockclimbing, of the future.

'Well, we got three out of four', draws Scott Backes, a dry-tooling specialist from Minneapolis.

'Huh?' we reply.

'Come back alive, come back with all your fingers and toes, come back as friends, come back with a summit', continue Kitty and Jay, the others silently mouthing the words, huge smiles working their way around to their ears.

But part of Athol and me is still up on Thalay Sagar. We are in an intangible, self-imposed exile. I guess we're not really off the hook. Sort of encapsulated. Unforgiven or something. ☹

Andrew Lindblade, 25, lives in Melbourne, and is now climbing full time after recently leaving the advertising business. As well as making hard alpine ascents, including the first Australian ascents of FitzRoy and Cerro Torre in Patagonia, he rockclimbs to a high standard. Recent ascents include Contra Arms Pump (grade 30), Nicaragua (30), and Daniel Or-Tiger (30) at Victoria's Mt Stapylton.

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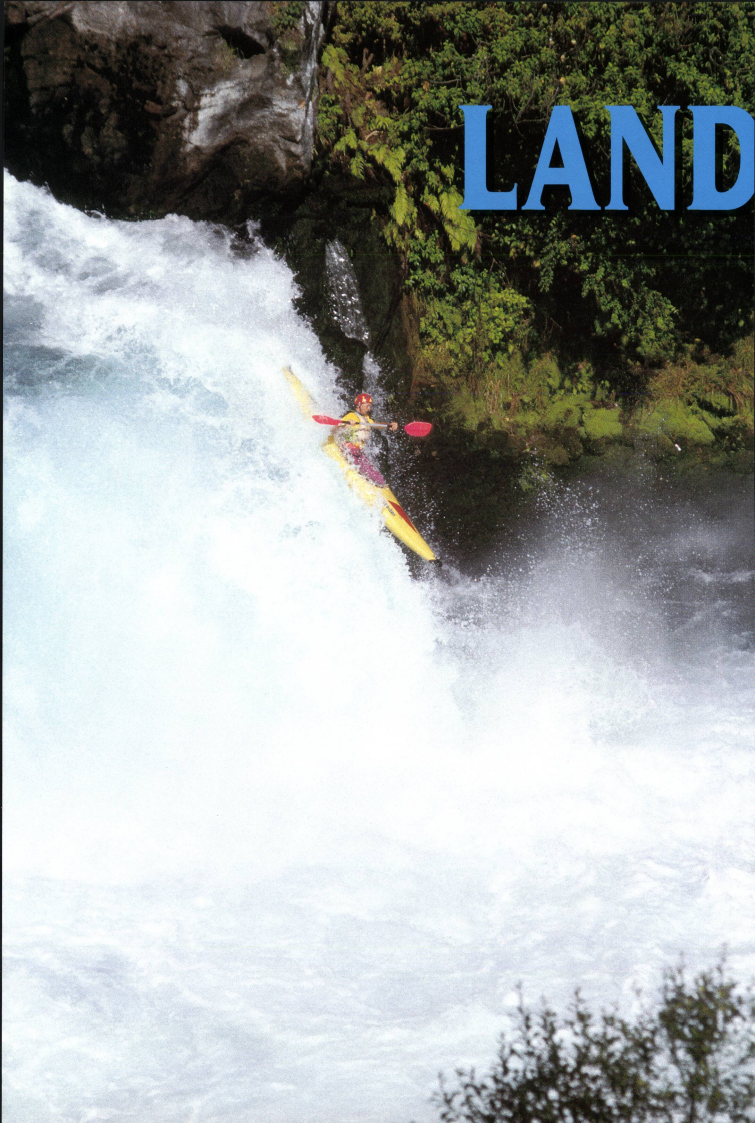
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LAND



OF THE LONG WHITE WAVE

White-water kayaking on
New Zealand's North Island,
by Andi Uhl and Sarah Moodie

Clear water tumbling through gorges, waterfalls, technical drops, dark-green bush, remote mountain ranges...

Once known only for its big, exciting, glacier-fed South Island rivers and alpine creeks, New Zealand paddling has taken on an extra dimension lately with the discovery that North Island rivers have a magic of their own. Many North Island river trips will take paddlers through areas so inaccessible and remote that they can only be reached by river. These are among the few untouched places left in the North Island of New Zealand and as such represent priceless remnants of native ecology and scenery. Many of these places, in particular the Kaituna River, have considerable significance to the Maori. It is thus important to treat New Zealand's bush and rivers with respect and common sense.

It is possible to kayak in the North Island all year round but conditions are best between November and January when the weather is warm and there is plenty of water. More detailed information on each river can be found in *New Zealand Whitewater: A Guide to 100 Great Kayaking Runs* by Graham Charles (Potton Publishing, 1996, \$NZ34.95), a NZ paddling Bible if ever there was one.

TRAVEL

There are cheap flights from every Australian international airport to Auckland and taking a white-water kayak on the plane is not a big problem. The airlines are usually quite generous and will rarely charge you excess baggage fees; even if they do it won't be much more than \$A100. If you can't be bothered taking your own kayak along, a number of shops, including the Auckland Canoe Centre, have a wide selection of boats for sale and for hire. Kayaking is a

Left, Barclay Armstrong negotiates the notorious Huka Falls, on the Waikato River, on a perfect line. **Right**, the appropriately named Bottom Drop of the Roller-coaster rapid, Wairoa River.

All photos Andi Uhl





Huka Falls are New Zealand's most awesome section of white water. The final waterfall, of eight metres, is the last of a series of very steep, powerful and dangerous rapids.

very popular sport in New Zealand and therefore a great variety of plastic boats—including the leading makes—is available as well as other good paddling gear.

A car with a roof rack can be rented on request or a cheap car can be purchased from dealers in Auckland who specialise in selling and buying travellers' cars. Most of the rivers listed here have good access roads and you don't need a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Since most of the land around these rivers is private property it is advisable to stay overnight in caravan parks or backpacker hostels rather than camp.

THE RIVERS



WAIKATO RIVER

New Zealand's longest river, the Waikato, flows out of vast Lake Taupo on the central plateau of the North Island. Hydroelectric lakes and dams now line much of the river's length but a few rapids remain. These offer excellent paddling opportunities for both beginners and extremists.

The lower Waikato River from the Karapiro dam to Cambridge is a grade I-II trip

often done by school groups and beginners. However, the upper reaches of the river where the water flows clear and fast will be of more interest to serious white-water enthusiasts.

Most popular is a short section of grades II and III which flows through the Aratiatia Scenic Reserve about 1.5 kilometres below the Aratiatia dam. The final rapid on this section is the Full James rapid. At flows above 160 cubic metres/second a big wave spans the width of the river here, offering some of the fastest, most exciting surfing most paddlers will ever experience. The rapid is a grade-III, 'big water' experience at this flow with big boils and strong eddy lines to challenge everyone's bracing skills. Watch out for jet boats, though—you'll come off second-best if you're unfortunate enough to collide with one!

Closer to Taupo thunders Huka Falls, the biggest white-water rapid in New Zealand. Huka (or 'hukanui') translates as 'great wall of foam'. Here the river narrows dramatically into a steep, narrow canyon and over a distance of 200 metres it drops about 24 metres. The final waterfall is an eight metre drop with an unpredictable recirculation at the bottom. While regarded as the ultimate challenge for expert paddlers, this very dangerous grade-V+ rapid can only be paddled at low flows and cannot really be recommended. The sheer volume of water roaring over Huka Falls holds viewers spellbound and for this reason it is one of

the major tourist attractions in Taupo. Visiting it (for a look!) is a must.



KAITUNA RIVER

The Kaituna flows from Lake Rotoiti, about 20 minutes north-east of Rotorua. Get in where State Highway 33 crosses the river. This section—which flows through a deep, narrow gorge—is only two kilometres long but contains three waterfalls one, three and seven metres high, respectively. These are known as Hinemoa Steps. They are beautiful but are graded IV and cannot be portaged or scouted.

However, a track leads to the pool below Hinemoa Steps and you can begin an easier trip from here. There are seven grade-III rapids as the river twists its way through the deep, green gorge which is densely lined with native bush. Each rapid ends in a pool—a handy spot to pull swimmers out of the water or just to enjoy the view. The several awesome 'play holes' and waves are perfect for a few hundred pop-out variations and a bit of showing off.

The Kaituna is rafted by commercial operators and a rafting trip over the waterfall should not be missed by paddlers who are not sufficiently confident in a kayak.

Just below the take-out point is a grade-VI waterfall—scary! Make sure that you know where it is.

WAIROA RIVER

A small, steep river dropping from the Kaimai Ranges close to Tauranga, the Wairoa is empty on most days because its water is diverted into a hydroelectric power scheme. On 26 days a year, however, water is released at an optimum flow of 15 cubic metres/second. On these days—which are spread from September to May—the river becomes a Mecca for white-water paddlers and rafters.

The put-in for the top section is below the almost impossible McLaren Falls, just off State Highway 29. This section is a technical grade IV with one grade V. Find a group of local paddlers who can explain the lines because some of these rapids are hard to scout and harder to portage (grade IV rapid, grade V portage!). The hardest rapid on the river, the Roller-coaster, is formed by big granite boulders. It has a steep gradient and ends at a dangerous, undercut cliff. Below this the Wairoa eases to grades II and III with lots of small surfing waves and eddies suitable for all paddlers. Boats can be carried through farmland down from the main road to the put-in for this section. At the end of the four kilometre bottom part is a three metre waterfall (grade III) which is relatively easy to paddle and a big challenge for novices. To find out when the river is due to be 'switched on', contact the Kaimai Canoe Club or phone Andi Uhl on (07) 362 4264.

RANGITAIKI RIVER

About 70 kilometres south of Rotorua, upstream from the rural village of Murupara, the upper RangitaiKI flows through New Zealand's biggest exotic forest. The trip begins with a short section of grade-III and grade-IV rapids including Jeffs Jiffs, a four metre drop. Scouting is strongly recommended.

The harder rapids at the beginning can be portaged and below Jeffs Jiffs the river is a constant grade II-III with lots of rocks and little waves. It is possible to get in at a number of places along the river. However, these are down unmarked forestry roads and not easy to find. An option is to get in touch with a commercial rafting company and follow its lead to the put-in and take-out spots. The trip takes more than two hours which gives you plenty of time to enjoy the beautiful forest scenery.

About 15 kilometres below Murupara is Aniwhenua Falls, a seven metre waterfall guaranteed to produce some of the most spectacular photos of your whole trip. The fall is of low volume (with most of the river diverted through a power scheme) but is exceptionally easy to paddle and can be done by novices. Below is a scenic, fun, grade-II trip which takes about an hour. Get out where the road drops down to the river.

TONGARIRO RIVER

The Tongariro is a cold mountain river fed by snow melt from the great volcanoes of the North Island's central plateau. In spring and after heavy rain it can become exciting and is graded between III and IV under flood conditions. This is an 'alpine-style' river with a constant gradient, fast-moving water and small eddies. Between the sections that can be paddled there are some grade-VI gorges and the take-outs are easily missed especially when the river is in flood. The river is usually

low with much of it diverted into various hydroelectric schemes. In this state it still provides a very nice trip, suitable for beginners and much more relaxing than during times of high flow. If you like fly-fishing take your fishing rod along. Trout is very common in the clear waters and you might be able to add a New Zealand speciality to your camping dinner menu.

RANGITAIKI RIVER

One of the wildest trips in the North Island is on the remote upper RangitaiKI, graded IV

and V. Turn off State Highway 1 at Taihape and head for Pukeokahu or the River Valley Lodge (you'll need a good map).

The RangitaiKI tumbles down from the Kaimanawa Ranges. The Pukeokahu section flows through a deep gorge, spectacularly beautiful—but spectacularly hard to walk out of if you change your mind! Rapids are formed by fast water dropping sharply between big rocks. Many of the steep rock-gardens and waterfalls require intensive scouting. Portaging is possible in all but one or two places. The trip takes up to five hours.

Dwarfed by the towering sides of the gorge the sight of the River Valley Lodge heralds the take-out point. This is private land and permission must be obtained to gain access. The lodge is run by a white-water rafting company owned by Brian Megaw (phone 061 388 1444). For a fee you can camp and use the lodge facilities (hot showers, blazing fire, cold beer!) or stay in the lodge itself. Brian will also help you with shuttles for the trip.

Below the lodge is another very scenic section of river. The lower RangitaiKI trip from River Valley Lodge to Omatene is 27 kilometres long and leads through another impressive gorge. Getting to the river along this section is not easy. There is only one more access point—at Tarata—between the put-in and take-out points. This section is often done as a two-day trip. Since the rapids are never harder than grade II it is frequently paddled in open canoes and by beginners.

MOTU RIVER

The Motu is on the East Cape, one of the least explored and most pristine areas of the North Island. This trip is a remote, three-day wilderness experience winding through the bush-clad Raukumara Ranges.

In summer the river is typically grade III with a couple of grade-IV rapids. In flood the river can reach grade V—big water. Every now and then a party has to extend its trip to sit out a flood, so take extra food.

Most of the rapids are found in two gorges. Between these is a four-hour stretch of flat and grade-II water.

It is a trip of about 85 kilometres. There is no road access other than the put-in and take-out points for most of its length. An early start is needed on the first day to make it through the top gorge in which there are no camp-sites. Day two is taken up with the lower gorge, which has the biggest rapids. Day three requires about five hours of flat-water paddling to the sea and the only road bridge.

Andi Uhl was born in Germany 32 years ago and moved to New Zealand in 1992. He began to paddle on flat water at the age of 12 and has since clocked up extensive white-water paddling experience on rivers around the world.

Sarah Moodie, a journalist with the *Daily Press* in Rotorua, is 26 years old. She has paddled and rafted in the UK, Austria and New Zealand and was the first woman to paddle Huka Falls successfully.

new zealand's north island



wild bushwalking



A person wearing a blue jumpsuit and a wide-brimmed hat stands on a grassy hill, looking out over a coastal landscape. In the foreground, there is a sandy area and some low-lying vegetation. The background features a bay with a sandy beach and a steep, rocky cliff. The hills in the distance are covered in dense, green scrub. The overall scene is a scenic view of a coastal area, likely Kangaroo Island.

ON THE

hop

Kangaroo Island
on foot,
by *Simon Kleinig*

in 1802 Matthew Flinders sailed round the west coast of South Australia and landed briefly on the north coast of a large island. He correctly assumed from the extraordinary tameness of large numbers of kangaroos that the island was uninhabited. Having been denied fresh meat for several months, Flinders used kangaroo meat to supplement his food supply, noting in his diary: 'In gratitude for so seasonable a supply, I named this southern land, Kangaroo Island.'

Kangaroo Island is Australia's third-largest island after Tasmania and Melville Island. At its western end Flinders Chase National Park encloses 74 000 hectares of dense bushland

largely preserved in pristine condition. The park was earmarked for protection early in the State's history by far-sighted naturalists. Poor soil and dense scrub combined to frustrate early attempts at agriculture and after 30 years of hard campaigning the area was declared a National Park in 1919. As a result the area remains the State's foremost wildlife refuge and is a marked contrast to other areas where pastoral activities have decimated native fauna and flora. The western coastline of Kangaroo Island falls within the park's boundaries and is a wilderness of rugged, isolated seascapes. The thundering swell of the Southern Ocean breaks violently along this coast and has left a

legacy of historic shipwrecks, many with tragic loss of life.

Flinders Chase is a favourite with tourists. Several walking tracks follow the course of rivers to the sea and are popular day walks. Few people, however, venture along the western coastline. This may be due to the absence of walking tracks and the forbidding nature of the rugged coast. Denise and I planned to walk the length of this coast from Cape du Couedic north to Cape Borda, a distance of about 50 kilometres. The walk would include some of the most arresting coastal scenery to be found anywhere in Australia. High, precipitous cliffs are a dominant feature of the walk. These are frequently broken by long, sweeping beaches and secluded coves. Several rivers have cut deep ravines on their way to the coast and empty into the sea through wide sand bars.

I had walked the lion's share of our proposed route in 1962. Then, as an impressionable 15-year-old, I was taken with the raw, spectacular beauty of the region. At that time only a handful of people had walked this lonely coastline. Thirty years on, I was keen to relive the experience and to see whether this coastal wilderness had remained unchanged by the passage of time.

We left the historic lighthouse and cottages at Cape du Couedic behind and headed north along windswept cliffs. Before us lay the sweeping arc of Maupertuis Bay. This coast was first explored by French navigator Nicolas Baudin in 1803. Flinders had ventured no further than the north coast. He left to Baudin the honour of the first circumnavigation of Kangaroo Island and Baudin named much of the coast during this voyage.

Our route took us over a hard, cemented limestone surface which would be a feature of the walk through to Cape Borda. Broken and weathered through the ages by wind and water, it combined with stunted vegetation to form a wild, desolate landscape. By mid-afternoon we had arrived at a broad, unnamed beach which stretched before us for nearly a kilometre. Our progress slowed to a snail's pace in the face of a strong headwind. We walked close to the waterline to take advantage of firm, wet sand and we rested frequently. Finally, and with some relief, we left the beach behind and tackled the steep slopes of the next headland.

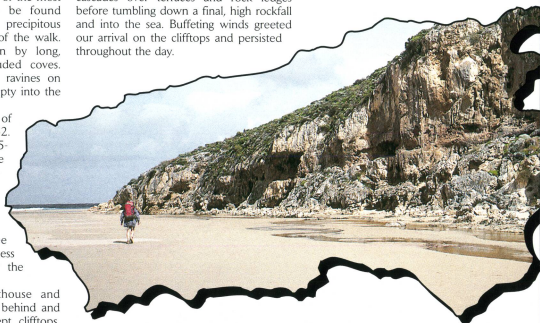
On the cliffs, vegetation takes the form of a low heath rarely more than a metre high. This is made up of tough, salt-tolerant species such as cushion bush, southern sea heath and creeping brookweed. We found the prolific pigface, its brilliant purple flower in full October bloom, most conspicuous. An interesting phenomenon is the varying height of coastal vegetation. This is the direct result of exposure to strong sea winds. On lee slopes and in protected hollows, the vegetation grows prolifically. At

the other extreme, on the most windswept cliffs, we saw broad-leaved pigface growing in a miniature form, wind-pruned to a natural bonsai.

By late afternoon we stood above the estuary of Rocky River. We walked a short distance inland and found a thicket of coastal white mallee which provided a good wind-break and a snug camp.

In the morning we climbed down steep slopes to make a straightforward crossing of the river. Descriptively named, Rocky River cascades over terraces and rock ledges before tumbling down a final, high rockfall and into the sea. Buffeting winds greeted our arrival on the cliffs and persisted throughout the day.

The cliff-top terrain was always interesting and often took unusual forms. In parts the limestone capping is weathered almost smooth and sometimes disappears beneath thick ground cover. Elsewhere heavy erosion has carved out sharp edges and broken the capping into small slabs, often resting on top of each other. These had the annoying habit of pivoting when walked upon, upsetting our balance and sending us stumbling headlong. Other sharply ridged pieces cut deeply into our boots. Most



Despite this, mild weather and easy terrain made for enjoyable walking. We began most days with overcast skies, often accompanied by light, misting rain. However, by midday the weather had usually cleared, leaving the rest of the day cool and pleasantly sunny. Occasionally we were confronted by the gaping, intimidating jaws of a sand goanna. The creatures were clearly unaccustomed to human intrusion into an environment in which they are the prime native predators. With a characteristic high-stepping gait, they would quickly disappear into the refuge of a nearby heath.

We planned to camp at river estuaries to be assured of a supply of fresh water every day. As there was no guarantee of finding water on the move we set off in the morning burdened with plenty of water, an assurance against possible warm weather. Before midday we rounded a prominent headland and quite unexpectedly the broad panorama of Sandy Beach opened up before us. Heavy seas were rolling in off the Southern Ocean on to an isolated beach. Ragged lines of breakers churned up white water for half a kilometre out to sea and threw up a misty haze of sea spray. This spectacle remained with us for over an hour as we crossed the beach and climbed the banksia-clothed flanks of the opposite headland. At its tip, the northernmost point of Maupertuis Bay, we stopped for lunch. An echidna with the same idea busily foraged beneath a cushion bush, oblivious of our presence.

Below the north wall of the Ravine des Cascaos with its many caves used by roosting birds. **Right**, early morning on the cliffs near Cape Borda. **Pages 68 and 69**, another view of the Ravine des Cascaos. All photos Simon Kleing collection

unusual are areas where the limestone has been fashioned into strange boulderfields. These often cover large areas and resemble a kind of moonscape.

Descending steep, scrubby slopes we arrived at Breakneck River, a broad stream characterised by a wide river mouth. We walked upstream for a kilometre in search of a camp-site protected from the wind. Our heels dug deeply into a wide sand bar which formed the north bank of the river until we came upon the perfect site. The tent was half up when we noticed a nearby hole quite different from the familiar goanna scratchings we had seen until then. A closer inspection revealed that we had a tiger snake for a close neighbour. We hastily gathered our gear and set up a sheltered camp in sand-hills overlooking Breakneck River.

We began our third day in light drizzle and after topping up on water we resumed our cliff-top route. Each headland we rounded revealed a new or unexpected form of terrain or vegetation. The ocean was always a strong focus and dramatic demonstration of the powerful forces of nature at work. Huge waves flared as white caps far out to sea or crashed on to some



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distant reef. Closer at hand, the swell of the Southern Ocean continued to pound at the foot of high, abrupt cliffs.

By late morning we had reached the south headland of West Bay. Paisley Island, a tiny speck off the tip of this headland, was regularly visited by sealing parties early in Kangaroo Island's history. Even viewed from a distance we could see that this barren, exposed island is still a popular refuge for seals. West Bay was the largest and most spectacular bay we saw on the west coast. Remote and surf-swept, it is nearly two kilometres deep and shelters a broad beach. Early in the afternoon, we reached the northern headland which guards the entrance to West Bay. Here, at Vennachar Point, high, dark cliffs drop away steeply. Below, waves dash themselves into foam and white water on jagged reefs and rock platforms. Vennachar Point was named after the *Loch Vennachar*, an impressive, three-masted ship which slammed into this part of the coast in 1901. After it failed to arrive as scheduled the ship's fate remained a mystery for some time. Final confirmation came when the ship's stern, bearing her name, was washed ashore at West Bay. Tragically, all 27 people on board the ship were lost.

The coastal scenery north of West Bay was the most spectacular of the walk. Steeply walled cliffs, some over 200 metres high, stretch away into the distance. We found few beaches on this very rugged section and the coastline is broken only once, at the Ravine des Casoars. As we pushed north from Vennachar Point, a light squall passed through bringing dark skies and rain. From time to time huge waves pounding the rocks below reached up above the cliff-tops, misting us with salty spray.

For safety reasons we tried to walk at least 15 metres in from the cliff-edge wherever possible. High-level caves and overhangs prone to collapse exist all along the coastline. At times, however, the encroaching thicket of mallee forced us to within metres of the edge.

About five kilometres from Vennachar Point the coastline turns east and we entered an extensive stand of she-oaks. Dead trees and fallen branches—this area is rarely visited by wildfire—blocked our way and slowed our progress. Late in the afternoon we began to look for a suitable camp-site. We finally found a small, flat area where years' accumulation of fallen she-oak needles has deposited a thick, insulating carpet over the rough limestone. We removed a few uncomfortable stones hidden beneath she-oak needles and—after waging a brief war with a few mosquitoes—settled down to a restful night.

Our fourth day took us along more coastline amid seascapes of increasing grandeur. A strong headwind whipped up early, checking our pace, and a heavily fractured limestone surface made for tedious going. A curious feature of the sheet limestone is the abundance of rounded or elliptical potholes of various sizes worn into it, some-

times to a depth of 60 centimetres. These potholes appear all along the coast and at times are so prolific that we were obliged to cross the few flat spaces between them in stepping-stone fashion. The wild flowers and small bushes which have taken root in these potholes are a strange sight.

Shortly after lunch, we dropped down into the Ravine des Casoars, the last river estuary on the west coast. Long and steep, the descent took us through sand hills clad in knee-high scrub. Below, the ribbon of the ravine's river threads a sinuous course through broad sand bars to the sea and a line of glassy breakers. The Ravine des Casoars was named in 1803 by Baudin, who mistook large numbers of dwarf emus—then native to the island—for cassowaries. It is sad, and warrants reflection, that the emus, being easy prey and good eating, were hunted to extinction, probably by sealers, even before 1836 when the island was formally settled.

Most beaches on the west coast are unsafe for swimming, so a long-awaited swim in the warm, saline reaches of the ravine's river was a high priority. Refreshed, and with the remainder of the afternoon at our disposal, we took time out to explore the ravine. A number of caves are honeycombed into the lower slopes and are easily accessible from beach level. Close to the beach, I was interested to locate a large cave where I had spent a night in 1962 and to find that it still provides shelter for a number of fairy penguins.

On our last day we climbed the steep north wall of the ravine and an hour later the white tower of Cape Borda lighthouse came into distant view. We made the mistake of going across country using the lighthouse as a landmark but dense scrub drove us back to the coast again. Finally, with the distinctive, square tower directly above us, we struck a rough track which took us up to the lighthouse and a return to civilisation.

In the five days we took to walk the west coast we saw no other persons. A kangaroo that confronted us at close quarters in dense mallee near Cape Bedout viewed us with a mixture of curiosity and puzzlement, reminding us of Flinders's encounter 200 years earlier. Apart from a small camping area at West Bay, there was no sign of human activity, past or present, along the length of the coastline. In fact for the duration of the walk it was difficult to escape the feeling that we were the first people to pass this way. The west-coast

kangaroo island

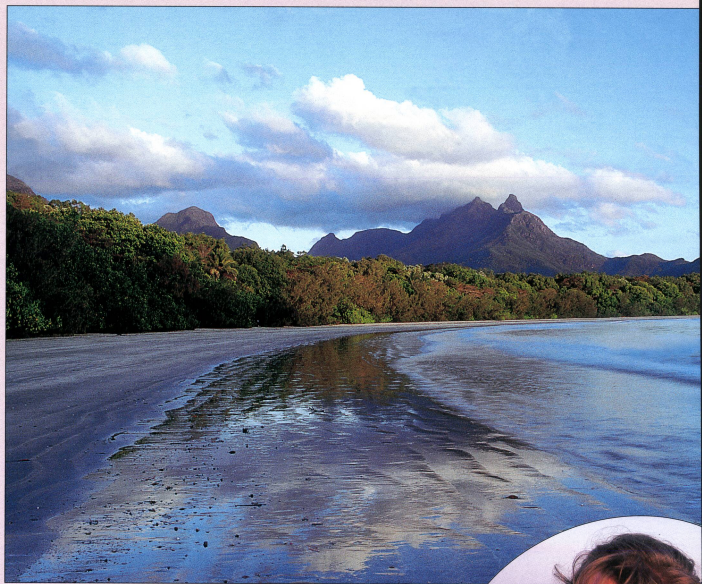


walk had been an exciting wilderness experience. As Kangaroo Island continues to realise its tourist potential it is important that this unique region remain as well protected for the future as it has been in the past. 🐨

Simon Kleing was introduced to bushwalking as a teenager. He lives in Adelaide, where he runs a small business. He enjoys walking regularly in his home State and has made a habit of bushwalking in Tasmania every summer.

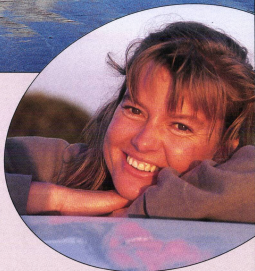
Tropical Queensland

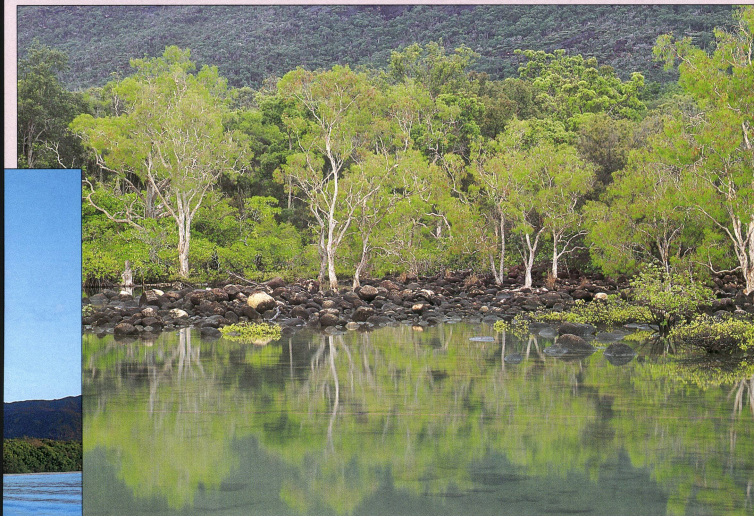
Sultry splendour, by *Sandy Scheltema*



Zoe Bay, Hinchinbrook Island.
Top right, Little Ramsay Bay,
 Hinchinbrook Island.
Bottom right, Cape Tribulation.

Sandy Scheltema has worked as a photographer in Australia, North and South America, the Pacific, Indonesia and Africa. She has contributed photographs for Greenpeace, the Wilderness Society and World Vision and has worked for the *Melbourne Age*.







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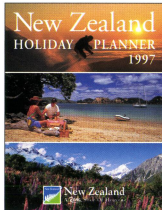
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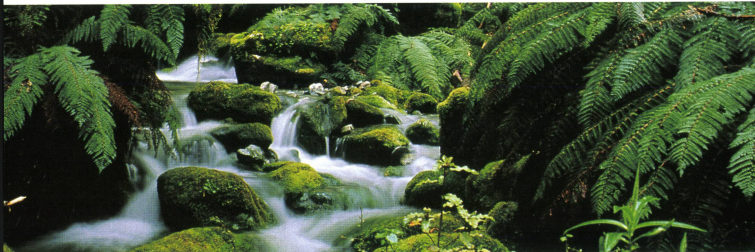
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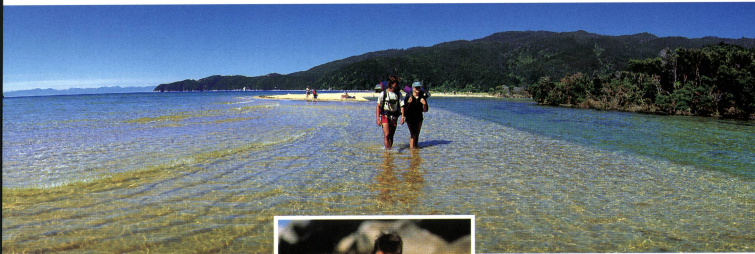
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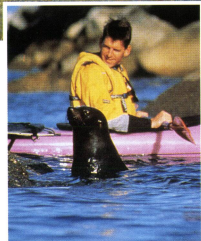
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The Main Range

Highest Australia for 'the rest of us', by Trevor Lewis



The term 'bushwalking' seems inappropriate when describing walks on the Main Range of the Snowy Mountains. 'Bush'—as we think of it—is left behind as the walker strikes out from Charlottes Pass or from the chair-lift at Thredbo, or heads uphill from the Illawong footbridge to enter a vast domain of rolling, treeless, alpine herbfield dotted with boulders and outcrops and patterned by areas of low scrub and marshland. These rounded hills may at first glance appear to possess little of the drama normally associated with alpine mountain ranges; but hidden among them, and accessible only to walkers, are mainland Australia's only glacier-carved landforms—including five alpine lakes—while the views from most summits reveal the tremendous contrast between its gentle

eastern slopes and the spurs and gullies which plummet 1500 metres and more into the Geethi valley to the west. (If you wish to explore the arduous country to the west, see my notes in *Wild* no 56.)

The Main Range has much to offer beginners and experienced walkers. The major tracks can be safely undertaken by anyone with reasonable fitness and suitable equipment; the various side-trips included below will appeal to those with more experience while still falling into the category of 'easier bushwalking'.

● When to go

The walking season usually extends from early November to late May (or until the first big winter snowfall). In late spring you'll almost certainly find long sections of track still buried by old snow. This need not deter

The sort of view you came for: from the track to Sentinel Peak. Both photos Will Steffen

you but you'll handle it more comfortably in boots than in lightweight footwear. Summer is a favourite time for walking in the Alps, with an abundance of wild flowers to marvel at; unfortunately, insect life is also prolific at this time of year—particularly the stinging March flies—but you may find that such annoyances are a price well worth paying.

● Maps and further reading

The *Mt Kosciuszko* 1:50 000 Central Mapping Authority and *Kosciuszko* 1:100 000 Natmap maps cover the area adequately. Both sheets fall some three kilometres short

of Dead Horse Gap, so if you're starting from there you may want to take the *Thredbo* 1:50 000 CMA sheet. Useful information about the road journey to the park can be obtained from the *Snowy-Kosciusko* CMA tourist map. This map includes an inset showing much of the Main Range area at a scale of 1:50 000, so you could probably get by on that alone. There are several walkers' guides to the Snowy Mountains but the long-established *Snowy Mountains Walks* (Geehi Bushwalking Club, Cooma, seventh edition, 1991) still leads the field, not so much because of the guidance it offers but because of the substantial background information provided.

● Access

The usual way to approach this sector of the Kosciusko National Park by road is through Cooma

to Jindabyne, beyond which a major road junction gives a choice: the Kosciusko Road to Charlottes Pass or the Alpine Way to Thredbo or Dead Horse Gap. The Guthega Road branches from the Kosciusko Road some 20 kilometres beyond here. Park entry fees must be paid if you go into the park by any of these routes (although the collection booths are sometimes unattended during the quiet periods outside the ski season). There is year-round public transport—a daily Greyhound-Pioneer bus—to Thredbo. (Contact that company on 13 2030 for details.) The schedule is leisurely; it is best suited to those on an extended trip.

● Camping

This article concentrates on the day walking that can be done in the area, with passing mention made of a couple of places where you can camp below the tree line on the

area's fringes. Camping within the catchments of the lakes is prohibited and elsewhere above the tree line sheltered and environmentally sustainable camp sites are not easy to find. This does not entirely rule out walks of two days or longer—but it's up to you to draw up your own itinerary. Camp fires are prohibited above the tree line—an academic rule since in much of the area you'd be hard-pressed to find two pieces of firewood to rub together. Roadside rest areas at Island Bend on the Guthega Road and at several sites along the Alpine Way provide basic facilities for camping. There is a fully serviced camping ground at Sawpit Creek on the Kosciusko Road.

● Warnings

Whether you're heading out for a long walk or a short one, carry warm and weather-proof clothing; even on benign summer days the wind-chill on the high tops can pack a punch. Accompanying the lack of shelter is a total absence of shade, so don't neglect to protect yourself from sunburn. Water is plentiful but some of it may not be safe to drink; a lot of people snow-camp in the area during the ski season and the waste they deposit must eventually find its way into the water-table. If this worries you, carry enough drinking-water for the duration of your walk (*and carry out your waste in several strong bags*).

● The walks

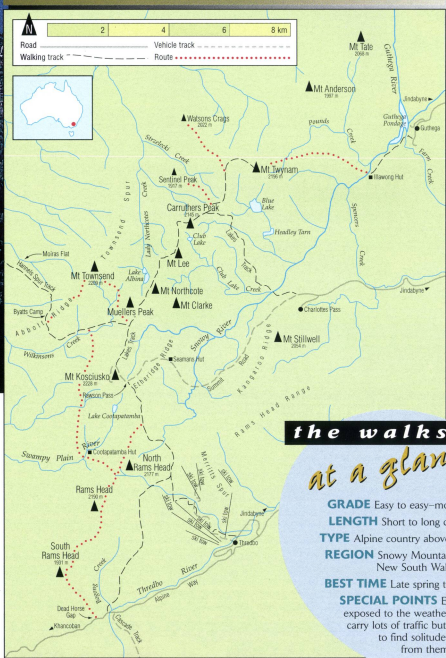
The Lakes Circuit. The highlights of this walk include views of all five of the region's lakes and an ascent of Mt Kosciusko. It's an easy walk but a long one—22 kilometres all told—and the energetic can extend it further with a side-trip or two.

From the parking area at Charlottes Pass set out along the old Summit Road, now permanently closed to vehicles. It angles across the gentle slopes of Kangaroo Ridge (somewhat misnamed—you're most unlikely to see any kangaroos in these parts) before crossing the high plain where the Snowy River rises. A gradual climb round the shoulder of Etheridge Ridge follows, passing Seamans Hut *en route* to Rawson Pass at the foot of Mt Kosciusko. From this point you can view Lake Cootapatamba by taking a short stroll along the walkway towards Thredbo. Return to Rawson Pass and follow the old road as it spirals to

Kosciusko's summit. You can see a lot of country from up here although the view is not as dramatic as that to be had from Mt Townsend, Carruthers Peak or the Rams Heads.

Backtrack along the Summit Road to the signposted junction where the Lakes Track diverges. This takes you along, or close to, the crest of the Main Range, sidling Muellers Peak, Mt Northcote and Mt Lee before reaching Carruthers Peak with good views of Lake

The Main Range



the walks at a glance

GRADE Easy to easy-moderate

LENGTH Short to long day walks

TYPE Alpine country above the tree line

REGION Snowy Mountains, south-east New South Wales

BEST TIME Late spring to early autumn

SPECIAL POINTS Easy terrain but exposed to the weather; main tracks carry lots of traffic but it is possible to find solitude away from them

EXTREME CONDITIONS REQUIRE EXTREME S H E L T E R



EPOCH 2

WEIGHT: 3.6 Kgs/7lb 11.5oz **CAPACITY:** 2 Person **POLES:** 4 Easton 7075 aluminium **INNER:** Breathable 70 denier ripstop **OUTER:** Polyester ripstop ultra 40D, 3000mm waterproofing PU coating, seam sealed. **FLOOR:** Nylon, 5000+ PU waterproof coating, seamsealed. **DIMENSIONS:** Height = 1150mm/45.3in Width = 1220-1580mm/48.03-62.2in Length = 2380mm/97.70in



EXTREME DOME

WEIGHT: 2.9 Kgs/5lb 15.2ozs **CAPACITY:** 3-4 Person **POLES:** 5 Easton 7075 aluminium **INNER:** Breathable 70 denier ripstop **OUTER:** Polyester ripstop ultra 40D, 3000mm PU waterproof coating, seam sealed. **FLOOR:** Nylon, 5000+ PU waterproof coating, seamsealed. **DIMENSIONS:** Height = 1300mm/51.2in Width = 2600mm/102.4 in, Length = 2100mm/82.7in



DRAGONFLY

WEIGHT: 2.9 Kgs/5lb 15.2ozs **CAPACITY:** 2 Person **POLES:** 2 Easton 7075 aluminium **INNER:** Breathable 70 denier ripstop **OUTER:** Polyester ripstop ultra 40D, 3000mm PU coating, seam sealed. **FLOOR:** Nylon, 5000+ PU waterproof coating, seam sealed. **DIMENSIONS:** Height = 1080mm/42.5in, Width = 1300-1600mm/51.2-63in, Length = 2350mm/92.5in

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Albina and Club Lake along the way. From Carruthers Peak it's mainly downhill—with a short side track giving access to Blue Lake and a glimpse of Headley Tarn—finally to reach the Snowy River, where stepping-stones provide an (usually) easy crossing, and the short climb to Charlottes Pass.

The Lakes Circuit—side-trips. Whether you're after ambience or peak-baggers' points, the continent's second-highest peak, Mt Townsend, rates more highly than its better-known neighbour Mt Kosciuszko. Reach it most easily by leaving the Lakes Track in the saddle between Mt Kosciuszko and Muellers Peak. Skirt Muellers Peak to the west or work your way along its skyline—a slower but more interesting route. The final ascent to Townsend's summit requires a little scrambling. South-west of Mt Townsend the several nobbs of the Abbott Ridge offer an interesting ramble with striking views over forested slopes tumbling down to Geehi Flat 1700 metres below. You can follow the ridge all the way to intercept the Hannells Spur Track. This track is not shown on the CMA map and is visible on the ground only as a faint pad, but it's strongly marked with cairns and stakes and will lead you back through the upper valley of Wilkinsons Creek to the Kosciuszko—Muellers Peak saddle.

Mt Twynam ranks third in the league table of Australia's high points and its summit is easily reached by following the track which diverges from the Lakes Track in the saddle north of Carruthers Peak. The same track also provides access to Sentinel Peak and to Watsons Crag. Even though it tops out at only 1917 metres, 200 metres lower than the nearby heights of the Main Range, Sentinel Peak's shapely pyramid presents an example—rare in this part of the world—of a 'real mountain'. Climbing Sentinel Peak entails more descent than uphill work. A rough foot-pad eases the passage along the tightrope-narrow ridge linking the peak to the main watershed. Watsons Crag is the term loosely applied to the huge, lateral spur which branches from the Main Range just before Mt Twynam. If you have the time it's well worth traversing the ridge all the way to the knoll at GR 158731 to enjoy an intimate view of the depths of Lady Northcotes Canyon. The last half-kilometre of this route leaves the snow-grass country with its easy going for rougher terrain, with some scrub and outcrops to negotiate. As on the ridge out to Sentinel Peak, rough foot-pads can be followed for most of the distance. The whole excursion makes rather a long side-trip and it is better to treat it as a day walk in its own right than as an extension to the Lakes Circuit.

Kosciuszko Track from Thredbo. This is by far the easiest way to reach Mt Kosciuszko and its environs. The Crackenback chair-lift, which (normally) operates throughout the year, makes short work of the climb out of the Thredbo valley; from its upper terminal a unique, raised, metal-mesh walkway enables you to travel the

undulating several kilometres to Rawson Pass without ever setting foot on the ground! At Rawson Pass join the Summit Road for the remainder of the distance to Kosciuszko's top. Dyed-in-the-wool bushwalkers may find it too easy by far but the walkway certainly serves its purpose, which is to prevent erosion, and it makes a good viewing platform from which to observe the mosaic of alpine flora.

As an alternative to using the chair-lift, you can follow the well-signposted Merritts Spur Nature Track. It starts on the down-valley side of the road bridge across the Thredbo River some 300 metres from the chair-lift station and takes a round-about route to the top of the mountain, managing to avoid much of the unsightly ski-resort infrastructure.

Alternative approaches—Dead Horse Gap. Another way to avoid the expense of the chair-lift ride is to start your walk at Dead Horse Gap, five kilometres south-west of Thredbo on the Alpine Way. Just below the gap itself, and on the Thredbo side of the Crackenback River crossing, you'll find a small parking area at the signposted head of the Cascade Track. The walking track up Bogong Creek Spur takes off from here; it briefly descends to a footbridge over Bogong Creek before climbing the spur. The steepness is soon left behind and a long, gradual ascent to the tree line follows. Finally the track joins the Kosciuszko Track not far from the chair-lift terminal. None of the topographic sheets show this track but it's a well-groomed, easy-to-follow pathway.

More of a rough foot-pad is the track which starts from Dead Horse Gap itself and climbs to the peak of the South Rams Head. Again, the maps don't show it and the CMA Thredbo sheet even misplaces the South Rams Head—its real location is GR 116587. You'll find pleasant, sheltered camp-sites where the slope levels off about halfway from the road to the summit of the South Rams Head. Beyond that peak it's off-track walking on a broad, undulating ridgetop—easy enough in clear weather but if the visibility is poor you'll need to watch your navigation. The summits of the Rams

It's tough at the top. (Club Lake.)

Head and the North Rams Head are worth visiting before joining the Kosciuszko Track where it angles across the main divide a kilometre south of Rawson Pass. Another possibility is to descend the western slope of the range somewhere north of the Rams Head, pass by Cootapatamba Hut—a poky, windowless emergency shelter—and then skirt the western slope of Mt Kosciuszko to reach Mt Townsend or the Abbott Range by way of the Wilkinsons Creek valley. This will get you well away from the crowds which throng the Lakes Track and the Kosciuszko Track.

Alternative approaches—Guthega. Like the routes originating at Dead Horse Gap, a walk in from Guthega entails some climbing—600 metres of it—but it's spread out over a fair distance and is seldom steep. On entering Guthega village take the upper road—not the lower road, which goes to the dam wall—and park near the ski lodges. Locate the foot track, not shown on the CMA map, which descends to Farm Creek and then parallels the Snowy River, passing the privately owned Illawong Hut before reaching a swing-bridge across the river. The track finishes here. Find your own way up the slopes of Mt Twynam avoiding the areas of low scrub as best you can. Don't let the contours mislead you—it's definitely easier to go over the top than to side the slopes across to Blue Lake. Camping opportunities exist in the vicinity of Pounds Creek; much of the area is rather exposed but sheltered sites can be found. A camp here would make an ideal base for day trips to Mt Twynam, Blue Lake, Watsons Crag and Sentinel Peak while to the north, Mt Anderson and Mt Tate beckon. ●

Trevor Lewis (see Contributors in *Wild* no 1) lives in Canberra, where he has worked in a variety of jobs. He is a keen writer who has published a number of articles on his outdoors experiences in Australia, New Zealand and Nepal.



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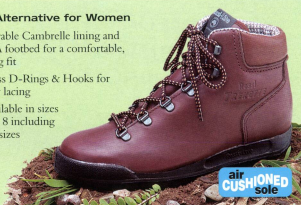
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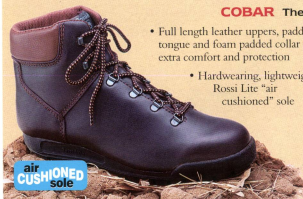
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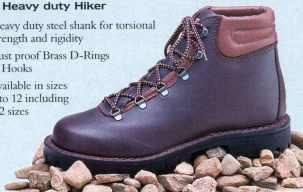
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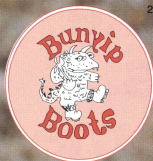
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Walking boots

Secrets of the quickstep, by Roger Caffin

You can leave all sorts of gear behind and still enjoy a bushwalk. But I bet you won't enjoy it very much if you leave your footwear behind or if it doesn't fit. There's no better way of ruining a walk than to have sore or blistered feet. So what should you put on your feet?

Sometimes the answer depends on geography. Walkers in some States go in for boots while those in other States prefer lightweight footwear such as the ever reliable Dunlop Volley or KT26 sand-shoes. The argument of which option is better sometimes gets heated and I'm going to duck the issue. In this survey we are going to look only at boots and I think that you'll

be surprised at the range from which you can choose. The criteria for inclusion were that the boots had to be of full leather construction and designed for bushwalking in Australia. (Other criteria are listed in the panel on this page.)

Boot design is every bit as complex as that of any other type of gear. There are different methods of construction, materials, and

target markets. When choosing a pair of boots you should remember the three principal points: comfort, comfort—and comfort. Get experienced staff in several good shops to help you to try on a range of boots before you decide.

Shapes and sizes

A boot is made on a last or a mould. Australians generally have wider feet than

Decisions, decisions. (Loddon Plains, western Tasmania.) Photo Simon Carter

This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task because of, among other things, his knowledge of the subject and his impartiality. The survey was checked and verified by Will Steffen, and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. It is based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of this issue's production; however, ranges and specifications may have changed in the weeks since then.

Some aspects of this survey, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgment on the part of the author, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

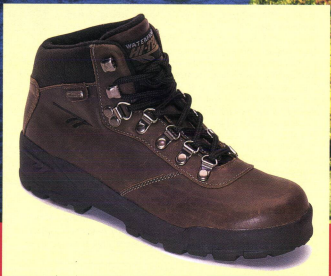
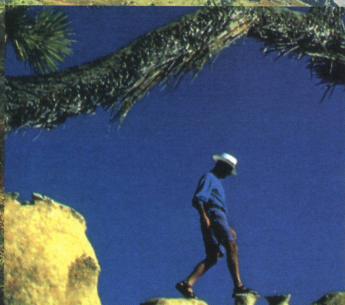
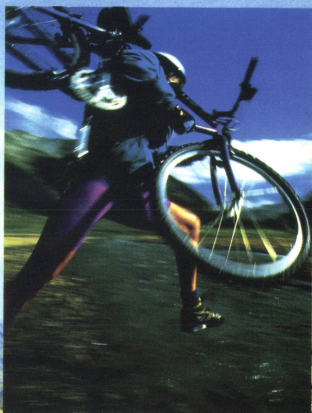
'Value' is based primarily upon price, relative to features and quality. A more expensive product may be better suited for some uses or be judged more highly by someone whose main concerns are features and quality.

An important criterion for inclusion in this *Wild* survey is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of major Australian capital- and other cities.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



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Europeans and local boot makers have developed Australian lasts which can fit feet up to size EEE. Many imported boots are now made on wide lasts for our market. (Imported boots used to be made on Italian lasts and, we remember, were painfully narrow.)

There is a theory that women's feet are narrower than, or a different shape from, men's feet. Why this should be so has never been explained to me. As a result some boot makers produce narrower women's fittings although many Australian women wear men's fittings. If boots are specifically men's or women's models this is indicated in the table.

Design

Originally boots were sewn on to a heavy leather sole with a welt round the edge and had hobnails and triconis for wear and grip. Then an Italian boot maker called Vitale Bramani developed the Vibram rubber sole which was stuck to the bottom of the boots in place of the hobnails. More recently the Italians eliminated the welt and bonded a rubber strip ('rand') round the boot's edge creating the now prevalent classic Italian design. Boots of this design tend to last a long time, can be resoled and are good for all sorts of walking and mountaineering. Edmund Hillary climbed Mt Everest in such boots.

US boot makers have gone beyond this by integrating the rand and the sole into a single, injection-moulded cup sole. They also use a lighter and softer grade of leather which usually lets boots adjust immediately to the feet rather than the feet having to adjust to the boots. This design is softer, lighter and more suited to walking and jogging than to more testing pursuits such as rock scrambling and mountaineering. The disadvantages are that these boots are unlikely to last as long—especially under severe and wet conditions—as those made from thicker or harder leather and cannot be resoled.

You will find that some makers specify what their boots are meant for: 'light walks' or 'heavy loads', for example. In general, you can take this labelling with a grain of salt. Heavy boots will last longer than very light ones but the penalties are the extra cost and weight. Many Tasmanian walkers argue that you must have boots for wet, boggy conditions: light-weight footwear would come off in the mud. That has not been my experience. On the other hand, very few Sydney-siders would wear expensive leather boots in a canyon. However, readers who prefer the security of the heavier style of boots, who expect to treat their boots harshly in places such as South-west Tasmania or the boggy tracks of New Zealand, or who intend to walk in areas where they may encounter frequent river-crossings or patches of snow and ice should focus their attention on the Italian-style boots listed in this survey and make a mental adjustment to my ratings accordingly.

I admit to a strong New South Wales bias right here: to me, the softer, US-style boots often feel more comfortable even though they are unlikely to last as long.

Fitting

As I have already emphasised, the most important criterion in selecting boots is your comfort. There are many small bones in your foot and they do a lot of work when you go bushwalking. Crush them and they are going to complain. Make sure that the boots are a good fit. In general, this means not too small or narrow but too large is also bad: that lets your feet move around inside the boots giving you an unreliable footing and, worse still, it allows your feet to rub against the boots and give you blisters.

Your boots should be wide enough to accommodate thick socks; and remember that your feet will expand during the day. The boots should be high enough in the middle for the top of your feet and the inner sole should be fairly flat under the arches—an excessive so-called 'arch support' is a good way of bruising the hard-working muscles and tendons under your feet. The boots should be so long that your toes do not touch the end even when the boots are unlaced. If you can get one finger between your heel and the back of the boot when it is unlaced, that's about right.

Wild Gear Survey

Walking boots

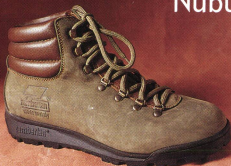
	Style, ankle height	Use	Weight, grams	Sole design	Rand	Flexibility	Ankle flexibility	Value	Approx price, \$
Aku Italy									
Pelmo*	C, M	B	1340	S	F	S	R	●●	279
Armond Italy									
Morbegno	C, M	B	1300	S	S	M	M	●●●	239
Brasher UK									
Hillmaster Classic	O, L	B	1100	T	F, P	Q	M	●●●	289
Lady Classic	O, L	B	970	T	F, P	Q	M	●●●	289
Hillmaster GTX	O, L	B	1220	T	F, P	Q	M	●●	369
Lady GTX	O, L	B	1100	T	F, P	Q	M	●●	369
Burnip Australia									
Razorback	O, L	B, L	1220	T	S	M	M	●●●	200
Cooroy	C, M	B	1400	S	S	M	V	●●●	235
Bogong	C, H	B, M	1900	S	F	M	F	●●	275
Danner USA									
Mountain Lite II*	O, M	B, M	1650	T	W	M	F	●●	360
Garment New Zealand									
Sarak	C, M	B	1220	T	S	M	M	●●●	189
Sierra	C, M	B	1280	S	F	S	M	●●	219
Horizon*	C, H	B, M	1560	T	F	S	R	●●	239
Sherpa	C, H	B, M	1620	T	F	S	F	●●	259
Hi-Tec China									
Lady Utah	U, M	B, L	1300	S	F	Q	M	●●	90
Utah	U, M	B, L	1300	S	F	Q	V	●●●½	90
Raindance*	U, M	B	1280	S	F	M	M	●●●	159
Kathmandu Italy									
Randonee	C, H	B, M	1450	S	F	S	M	●●	229
Women's Randonee	C, M	B, M	1100	S	F	M	M	●●½	229
Randonee Sympatex	C, H	B, M	1450	S	F	S	F	●●	259
Trail	C, H	B, M	1700	T	W	M	F	●●	289
La Sportiva Italy									
Tundra	C, M	B	1050	T	F	M	F	●●½	239
Vermont	C, H	M	1400	T	F	S	M/R	●●	269
Sherpa	C, H	B, M	1450	T	F	S	M/R	●½	329
Pacific Crest	C, H	M	1800	S	F	V	R	●½	369
Merrell Thailand									
Appalachian*	C, M	B	1450	T	F	M	M	●●●	220
Rimrock GTX	C, H	B, M	1480	T	F	M	F	●●	260
Nevados China									
Mendoza	U, M	B, L	1190	S	F	Q	V	●●●½	95
Rim	U, L	B, L	1280	S	F	Q	V	●●●	150

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if the shoe fits...

When you wander into your local outdoors shop armed with a copy of this *Wild* walking-boots survey in your back pocket and prepare to stare mesmerised at the extensive range of footwear on offer, take a moment to consider a low-cost, low-tech alternative. Before I tell you what this alternative is, let me make it clear that this is not a business-inspired, profit-orientated 'advertiser'. This is simply one walker's opinion based on extensive field trials and observation. The low-cost option I refer to is the humble Dunlop KT26 sand-shoe.

This go-almost-anywhere, lightweight and sturdy shoe has satisfied most of my bushwalking footwear needs for more than 16 years and continues to perform well in comparison with more fancied and expensive alternatives. How can this be?

Well, first, the lightweight mesh and other stuff on the top of the shoe sit on what looks like a small truck tyre. This chunky sole provides more than adequate protection for the bottom of your foot. Secondly, having regard to the rule of thumb that a kilogram on your feet is equal to four on your back, I conclude that the weight of a sand-shoe—no more than about 600 grams—is a strong recommendation.

'Hal', you say. 'What about wet feet?' Well, yes, I tend to be the first in any group to get wet feet but my feet are also the first to dry when the sun comes out or when my group pulls into camp. Also, while you are walking the water tends to squish out of the top of the shoe so, unlike what happens with waterlogged leather boots, you don't carry around a bucket of water on either foot.

With the increased agility that results from this lack of weight on your feet, stepping from stone to stone, creek jumping and walking along skinny log bridges become much easier propositions. By combining your KT26s with a pair of gaiters in appropriate locations (such as Tasmania) the shoe will not suck off your foot nor will it fill with mud. (Your laces may even stay clean.)

For me, cost is also a strong argument. KT26s are among the few things in this world that have become cheaper in real terms over the years. They can still be purchased today from your local shoe emporium for less than \$30. I can walk in, pick a pair of size 9½ off the shelf and leave (through the check-out) without even trying them on and know that I have the equipment ready to perform. I also have some change left in my pocket. This takes about 10–15 minutes, giving me more time to consider what food I will take with me!

My KT26s have matched it with all sorts of competitors from Red Backs to Rossis, Sherpas to Sympatex and time and again the owners of these heavier-duty models have been impressed with the performance of my off-road transport. My KT26s have travelled along creek-beds and in the surf. They have been in the outrageous mud of South-west Tasmania and the bone-dry heart of the Northern Territory. They have trekked for a month in New Zealand—including that bog which disguises itself as Stewart Island—and have survived what must be the sharpest rocks in the world along the water's edge of Surprise Bay, Tasmania. They have been in deep valleys and along high ridges. They have even scaled Australia's highest peak—Mt Kosciuszko—from

Geehi Flats along Hannells Spur. (Okay, it's not the Himalayas but this is Australia.)

There must be some disadvantages, you are thinking. Well, yes, I have to admit that the humble KT26 is not for everybody. If you have weak ankles or particularly tender feet, maybe a real boot is your best option. If you want to avoid getting wet feet for as long as possible, have a tendency to kick rocks (especially at the end of a long day) if you want to walk in soft snow or over hot coals, boots might be for you. And if you love long laces, bee's wax and looking the part...what can I say?

Some things in life are ahead of their time. Before the KT26 there was the invincible Dunlop Volley, winner of tennis Grand Slams and a high achiever in most other pursuits. A highlight for me on a recent trip along Tasmania's South Coast Track, while outfitted in my KT26s, was to spot a lone sexagenarian walker coming the other way equipped with a good old Paddy Pallin H-frame pack and wearing—*you guessed it*—a pair of Dunlop Volleys. I'd read about these rare apparitions and felt privileged to see one with my own eyes. It sent a chill down my spine and further convinced me that lightweight comfort need not be sacrificed in response to the strong marketing forces of boot manufacturers.

So the next time you are thinking of footwear, take a moment to consider the low-cost, low-tech option. Armed with good socks, Elastoplast for those pesky blisters and a pair of gaiters, the KT26 may just be the shoe for you.

Peter O'Dwyer

Ankle height is up to you.

The higher the ankle the less mobility you will have. Personally, I don't believe the 'high cut for ankle support' theory: I see more people sprain their ankles when wearing big, clumsy boots than when barefooted. On the other hand, if you like high boots that's fine. High boots can often be adjusted for walking by not lacing the top set of hooks.

One serious problem with high boots can be the sideways pressure the top of the boot places on the muscles and tendons in your leg above the ankle. This can become extremely painful. In some cases I believe that a boot's leather and padding can be soft enough while the stitching at the top is far too tight. If you found you have bought a boot which causes this problem, do not persist with it!

The width of the inside of the heel is also important. If your heel has too much sideways slop you can destroy the back of the boot quite easily, especially if you tend to walk on one side of your foot. (That's why there is reinforcing hidden inside the heel.) A solid round round the back helps a lot, too. Insufficient space inside the heel can result in severe blisters at the sides of your heel. Some manufacturers tackle this by having a wide heel combined with good padding on either side of the ankle. You can sometimes modify the fit by adding an extra inner sole.

Regarding thick socks: try a pair of very light socks next to your skin. (They should stick to your feet and result in any movement being

Wild Gear Survey

Walking boots continued

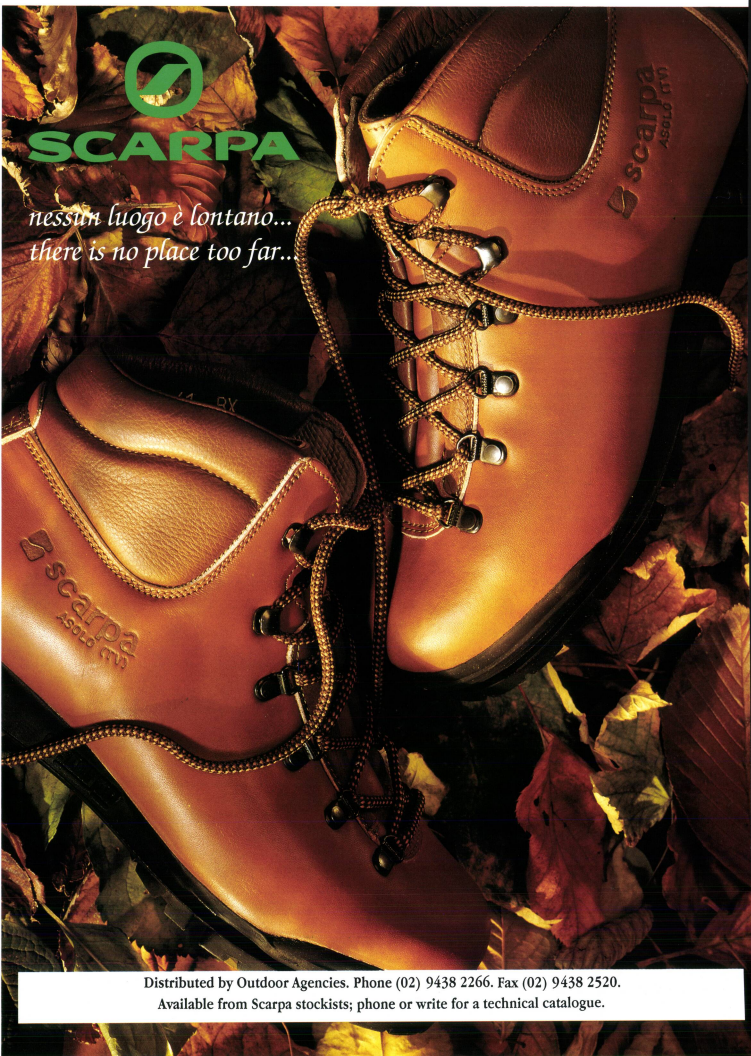
	Style: ankle height	Use	Weight, grams	Sole design	Rand	Flexibility	Ankle flexibility	Value	Approx price, \$
Nike China									
Air Terramoto*	U, L	B, L	910	S	F+	Q	V	●●●½	150
Rockport China									
Leadville	U, M	B, L	1080	T	H+, W	Q	M	●●	289
Rossi Australia									
Trekking*	C, M	B	1320	S	S	M	M	na	180
Salomon France									
Authentic 5*	C, M	B	1250	S	S	Q	V	●●●	199
Scarpa Italy									
Lady Trek	C, M	B, M	1250	S	S	M	M	na	249
SL Attak	C, H	B, M	1360	S	S	S	F	na	289
Snowgum New Zealand									
Bluegum	C, M	B, M	1280	S	F	S	M	●●	209
Zamberlan Italy									
Lady Lite	C, M	B, M	1190	S	F	M	V	●●½	269
Ibex	C, M	B, M	1430	T	F	S	M	●●	299

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent na not assessed * not seen by referee Style: Classic, Other, US-style Ankle height: High, Low, Medium Use: Bushwalking, Light day trips, Mountaineering/alpine trekking Sole design: Single, Two-layer Rand: Full, Half, Partial, Small (not over sole) Weight Flexibility: Medium, Quite flexible, Stiffen, Very soft Ankle flexibility: Firm, Medium, Restraining, Very flexible The country listed after the manufacturer's name is the country in which the products are made. However, some manufacturers may have factories in more than one country—you should check the origin of the boots you consider buying with the shop or manufacturer concerned.



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Manufacturers and models

Aku

Pelmo: Lightweight, classic-design walking boots with a narrower fitting for those who don't have Australian duck feet. The sole is synthetic Vibram rubber, which is hard-wearing but less grippy on wet logs and rock.

Armond

Morbegno: Lightweight, classic-design leather boots. Very comfortable but fairly large heel region.

Brasher

A cross between walking shoes and walking boots with an innovative, lightweight, curved sole which prevents the heel from lifting out. Light weight and comfort are the principal aims. The light soles on all models are designed to be resoled. The back of the ankle is in cut at the top: it may pull in a bit tightly for people with big tendons.

Hillmaster Classic, Lady Classic: These are the standard boots. The Lady version is a bit lighter.

Hillmaster GTX, Lady GTX: Same as above but with Gore-Tex lining, and slightly heavier.

Bunyip

Australian-made walking boots using wide, Australian lasts. Company acknowledges previous problems (years ago) with soles coming off, but claims that this has been fully solved and offers a lifetime warranty against manufacturing defects.

Bogong: Heavyweight, classic-design walking boots. The well-greased leather is very thick but still fairly soft and comfortable.

Razorback: Low-cut, lightweight walking boots/shoes designed for women. Flexible and very comfortable.

Cooroy: Fairly lightweight, classic-design walking boots of soft, well-greased leather and with good flexibility.

Danner

Mountain Lite II: A medium-weight walking boot of older, classic design with a welt and normal double-tongue; available from shoe shops and by direct mail.

Garmont

Classic-design boots made in New Zealand from Italian designs but with an Australian last. All the Garmont boots have a high ankle. If tightly laced the ankle flexibility is reduced; not using the top hooks noticeably improves flexibility.

Sherpa: Heavyweight mountaineering boots with high, firm ankle.

Horizon: Classic-design mountaineering/walking boots with high ankle.

Sierra: Lightweight, classic-design mountaineering/walking boots with a well-padded, high ankle.

Sarak: Lightweight, classic-design, high-ankle walking boots.

Hi-Tec

Lightweight, US-style footwear. Some older Hi-Tec models, while light and comfortable, had a bad reputation for the glued foam soles falling off after a short while, either at the middle or at the heel. Sometimes this was due to using the boots on much rougher ground than was intended. Most of those older models have been replaced by new styles featuring fully moulded soles with integral rands. These newer styles seem to be much better made.

Utah: Lightweight, US-style walking boots. Quickly become comfortable.

Lady Utah: Lightweight, US-style walking boots. Quickly become comfortable but are stiffer at the back of the ankle than the Utah.

Raindance: Lightweight, US-style walking boots; intended for wet conditions; quickly become comfortable; slightly more solid than the Utah.

Kathmandu

Kathmandu is a New Zealand company producing its own range of equipment including boots.

Trial: Heavyweight, classic-design, high-ankle walking boots.

Randonnee Sympatex: Classic-design, solid, leather walking boots with a moderately high ankle.

Randonnee: Classic-design walking boots; light but solid; similar to above but without Sympatex lining. Recently switched from Skywalk to Vibram soles.

Women's Randonnee: Classic-design walking boots; similar to Randonnee but lighter and narrower. Recently switched from Skywalk to Vibram soles.

La Sportiva

Apart from the Tundra, these boots feature a high, strong, wrap-around ankle limiting full ankle movement. The ankles are adequately padded for comfort. Most are more appropriate for alpine/high-altitude trekking use.

Tundra: Very lightweight, classic-design boots with flexible, narrow soles and a medium-weight fitting.

Pacific Crest: Heavyweight mountaineering boots with a high, strong ankle—more suitable for alpine climbing than for bushwalking.

Vermont: Light-medium-weight boots with a high, strong ankle.

Sherpa: Medium-weight walking and mountaineering boots with a high, strong ankle and solid foam/rubber sole.

Merrell

Large, US boot manufacturer producing boots of a reasonably classic design.

Rimrock GTX: Medium-weight mountaineering/walking boots with some Cordura/Gore-Tex inserts but basically considered to be leather boots. The high ankle can restrict walking movement a bit if the lacing is done up fully.

Appalachian: Light- to medium-weight walking boots; very well padded and comfortable; can be tricky to lace up properly the first time; halfway between classic- and US designs.

between them and the thick socks. This cuts down on blisters.) A pair of thick socks over the top helps to cushion your feet for the day's walking.

Breaking in

All boots used to need 'breaking in' and that was done by standing in a river for half an hour. This was needed to let/make the boots adjust their shape to your feet. Well, forget that. If the boot is not a reasonable fit in the shop it will probably be almost worn out in the field before it becomes comfortable. However, you may need to allow a few minutes for the leather to warm up a bit before new boots begin to fit well. Any good shop should allow you to bring a pair of boots back and swap them for a different size if you have only worn them inside the house for a day or so. Just remember to keep them in pristine condition.

The survey

We contacted as many boot makers and importers as we could find and invited them to submit up to four models to be surveyed. All boots were examined by at least two experienced walkers (including the author). They were tried on around the house by whomever they fitted and some were also field-tested on walks.

Most shops will carry only a few brands but some will get a different brand in if you are really interested. Shop around if not satisfied. A couple of the brands listed were included despite the manufacturers concerned not wishing to participate: these may have incomplete data.

Price is the approximate shop price: it may vary.

The upper part of a boot may be made of one or more pieces of leather and separate pieces may be used for the tongue. A single piece is the traditional (Italian) design and was once considered to be more waterproof but with modern leather treatments that is probably less important. However, exposed stitching can wear away. The quality of the leather is another matter: real, full-grain leather is stronger and more waterproof than softer leathers and suede.

The height of the **ankle** determines both the boot's flexibility and its support. Some people prefer great flexibility and little support while others would rather have the ankle support a high-cut boot can give. Some boots allow extra flex at the ankle by bending the line of the lacing and modifying the back section. The ankle and tongue should be padded or they may rub badly: the amount and height of the padding varies. The degree to which the top of the boot cuts in at the back is also important. Too little and your heel can float out of the boot with every step, leading to blisters. Too much and you can bruise your Achilles tendon.

Sole design. The upper part of the boot is usually stitched to a mid-sole or insole which is not always obvious. If the stitching is visible on the outside the boot is said to have a welt. These boots are usually easy to resole. Today most boots



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Manufacturers and models continued

Nevados

Lightweight, US-style walking boots/shoes with moulded sole/rand combinations, available from a range of sports shops.

Mendoza: Lightweight, US-style walking boots, immediately comfortable.

Rim: Lightweight, US-style walking boots, nicely padded and immediately comfortable; intended to be more waterproof than most.

Nike

Lightweight, US-style walking boots/shoes with moulded sole/rand combination.

Air Terramoto: Very lightweight, comfortable, US-style walking shoe; a good compromise between heavier-style boots and sand-shoes; available in men's and women's fittings.

Rockport

Lighter weight, US-style walking boots/shoes; available from a wide range of sports shops.

Leadville: Moderately lightweight walking boots/shoes for slim and medium-width feet (also suitable for street use).

Rossi

Australian boot manufacturer well known for work boots.

Trekker: Classic-design boot with medium-height ankle.

Salomon

French boot manufacturer well known for ski boots.

Authentic S: Simple-looking but slightly different classic-design boots with Cordura at the ankle—surprisingly comfortable and lightweight.

Scarpa

Large, classic-design Italian boot manufacturer; its boots are widely available but not cheap.

SL Attica: Classic-design boots with high ankle and good width; perhaps a bit heavy for 'northern States' bushwalking.

Lady Trek: Classic-design boot but with lower ankle and more extensive ankle padding.

Snowgum

Bluegum: Classic-design, fairly solid walking boots; essentially relabelled Garmont Sierras, but blue. (See Garmont Sierra for further description.)

Zamberlan

Traditional Italian mountaineering boots made with an Australian last.

Ibex: Middle-weight walking boots with soft soles. The polyurethane rubber sole is long lasting but can be more slippery on some surfaces, especially on wet wood and rock. The foot-bed has a very strong smell as a result of being treated with an antibacterial agent.

Lady Lite: Lightweight, classic-design walking boots; easy to lace up.

do not have a welt—the stitching is inside the boot. The advantage of the concealed stitching is that the boot is narrower and neater and more useful for scrambling and climbing. However, it may not be possible to resole such boots. Inside the boot there may be a full layer of reinforcing going from heel to toe and giving considerable stiffness, and/or a shank reinforcing just the back half of the sole. Mountaineering boots generally need lots of stiffness; joggers do not need any. It is up to you how much stiffness you want.

A **rand** is a strip of rubber round the edge of the boot covering the joint between the upper and the sole. It may be just at the front or it may go right round the boot. It is used for reinforcing and waterproofing the joint between the sole and the upper and for protection against scuffing. A rand is a good thing but it makes the boot heavier and stiffer. Boots with a foam sole and without a rand have a bad reputation for coming apart at the glue line. Many boots integrate the rand and the sole into one piece.

It is very rare for a boot not to have some sort of lining. The lining should be smooth to protect the foot against rubbing. It should be soft but tough. A bit of padding can make boots more comfortable and even better fitting and can insulate your feet against the cold. Some boots have a Gore-Tex or Sympatex lining to stop water coming through. However, I find that when

it rains the water runs down my legs into my boots and not even Gore-Tex works when you are knee-deep in a river.

Most boots have several loops or eyes at the bottom of the tongue, and hooks further up. The hooks make it easier to lace your boots up. How many hooks and loops a boot has depends on the length of the opening, the shape of the boot and the designer's preference. Some boots have a 'locking hook' in the middle, especially when the ankle is distinct from the lower section. This special hook locks the boot-lace and prevents the tension in the laces from being redistributed and thus loosening the laces. In theory, this allows you to have the top of the boot laced loosely, and the lower part laced tightly.

The tongue should have some padding as it goes across the top of your foot to protect you from the thin bootlaces. The gussets (or 'bellows') down each side of the tongue are there to prevent dirt and water from getting into your boot. They should be soft and you should not be able to feel them when wearing the boot. Some are made from leather, others from synthetics such as Cordura. They should come a fair way up to be effective but need not reach the top.

Most, but not all, boots have a foot-bed—a removable inner sole. Often the foot-bed is moulded to contour round your foot and keep it in the right place in the boot. Some ordinary shoes have a large 'arch support' in the middle: this can bruise the muscles and

tendons under your arch and, despite being quite common, can cause problems when you are working hard. It is possible to alter the foot-bed in some boots to make them fit better. It is also possible to add a flat liner under the shaped foot bed for extra adjustment.

A boot's **sole** gets a lot of attention because it is so visible. Several types of soles are on the market: the most common ones are Vibram and Skywalk. Most important is whether the lug pattern is going to grip well and last for a reasonable time. Shallow lugs will wear out quickly; closely packed ones can fill up with mud and lose their grip; very widely spaced ones may be uncomfortable and give poorer grip. Synthetic rubber soles last longer than natural rubber but have a reputation for slipping on wet logs and rock. The requirements for off-track walking may be quite different from those for walking on tracks. With recent improvements in materials and design, some manufacturers put a foam layer between the tread and the mid-sole. This gives greater cushioning for your feet; however, the sole may wear out a little faster.

Flexibility. If the boot can't flex forwards you are going to get a sore shin, especially when going uphill. Flexibility can be improved by separating the single, clean line of hooks and eyes up the front into two sections, with a small hinge region between them. The padding at the top of the tongue will also affect how flexible the boot feels.

Flexibility backwards is controlled by the height and padding at the back of the ankle. You will notice this feature when you are going down a long hill. A low back is always more flexible but with a clever design a high back can still have sufficient flexibility.

The invisible heel cup is a critical component for many people, especially for those who twist their heels sideways when walking. A strong heel cup will stop your heel from moving sideways in the boot and thus tearing the upper away from the heel. A good fit of the boot heel, the presence of padding around the heel and a good, solid rand will also help.

Value is roughly based on the quality of the boots relative to the price: a cheap boot may thus have a higher value rating than an expensive one. This is a very subjective judgment: what's quoted can only be the author's opinion and this (Sydney-based) author is very biased towards light weight, high flexibility and superior comfort. Your needs and biases may be different. In particular, if you are after a heavy-duty, long-lasting, 'mud and crud' boot, you should generally add a bullet to most of the full-leather, Italian-style boots. 📌

Roger Coffin, a CSIRO research scientist in wool technology for 26 years, has been bushwalking since he was a Scout. At present he lives in Sydney and spends his spare time walking in the Blue Mountains and crossing the Australian Alps on foot and by ski.

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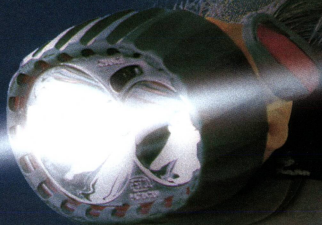
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L ightweight binoculars

Seeing is believing—a *Wild* survey

a number of years ago I was carefully studying a climber at a well-known Victorian cliff attempting a route from which I had once backed off. A friend handed me his tiny binoculars and a whole new world of rockclimbing espionage was opened to me. I could see every move the climber made and although the binoculars were of low power I could even see exactly where he was placing his protection. Not long after this I bought my own pair of lightweight binoculars and used them for everything from checking out potential XCD gullies on distant, snow-covered peaks to watching peregrine falcons soar above the crags. The only problems were remembering to pack the binoculars and the dust that eventually infiltrated them and made them useless.

Not so long ago a pair of 'lightweight' binoculars could weigh a kilogram and take up valuable space in your rucksack. These days there are models a fifth of that weight and size; some will fit into the palm of your

hand. Camera shops are the most common stockists but it is also worth checking out a few outdoors shops and optical-instrument suppliers. Be wary of second-hand merchandise as the optics may be misaligned from abuse. There is a bewildering array of brands and models on the market; some may cost as little as a day's pay while others can seriously dent the healthiest budget. Recently, a number of autofocus models have come on to the market but the best value for money still seems to be in the central-focus-ring system found on most binoculars.

This survey by no means includes every model of lightweight binoculars which may

be purchased in Australia. What you see here is a sample suited to outdoors pursuits ranging from day walks to long ski-tours. Almost every one of these manufacturers has other models in its range that may be suitable for outdoors use. A number of other manufacturers—some, such as Olympus and Leica, renowned for their high-quality standards—also make products which may be suitable although they are generally more expensive. The emphasis has been placed on small and light.

Prism type. In general there are two types of prism: porro and roof. Roof prisms require more precision in manufacture to

Good, lightweight binoculars can let you get this close to wildlife. *Debbie Howie*



This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task because of, among other things, his knowledge of the subject and his impartiality. The survey was checked and verified by *Glenn Tempest* and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. It is based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of this issue's production; ranges and specifications may have changed in the weeks since then.

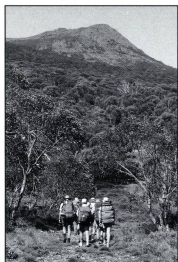
Some features of this survey, such as the assessment of a product's suitability for a particular use—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgment on the part of the author, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

An important criterion for inclusion in this *Wild* survey is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops or camera shops in the central business districts of major Australian capital- and other cities. Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

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achieve high-quality optics and hence are more expensive to produce. Their biggest advantage is their compactness. In contrast, porro prisms are more robust, cheaper and let in more light. (The BAK-4 prism used in some brands is essentially a modified version of the porro.)

Magnification. Binocular models are referred to by two numbers (for example, 8 x 24); the first is the magnification and the second, the diameter in millimetres of the objective lenses (the

ones on the front). Magnification, or 'power', is related to how large an object appears through the lens. Although it would seem that big is better, magnifications of 10x or greater are difficult to hold steady and may be unsuitable for the average user. In the field I have found that holding a 10x pair against a tree is the only way I can maintain a viewable image.

Objective lenses. The size of the objective lens determines the amount of light entering the binoculars and the field of

view. Large lenses allow more light through but 'brightness' is also affected by the magnification. Dividing the objective lens diameter by the magnification gives a figure known as the 'exit pupil', an indicator of how bright the binoculars will be. The bigger the exit pupil value, the brighter the image seen through a given pair of binoculars. Obviously, higher magnifications require larger objective lenses for use in low light (a 10 x 24 is darker than an 8 x 24). For general use outdoors a magnification around 7-10x and an objective lens diameter from 20-25 millimetres is a good compromise between weight, size and viewability. If you want a wide field of view and a large magnification, be prepared to start dumping things out of your pack as binoculars begin to get big and bulky from here on.

Optics. Quality comes at a price and the best optics are usually found in the higher price bracket. Lenses may be single- or multicoated and these types of coatings vary widely. The more expensive multiple coatings tend to cut glare and reflections more efficiently without significantly reducing light transmission. This leads to sharper and clearer vision, especially in strong sunlight or haze. Cheaper lenses may show distortion around the edges and fail to focus sharply enough. The best method is to look through a number of different brands/models and decide how much trade-off you can accept between price and clarity. The ratings in the table are necessarily subjective; readers should make their own assessments.

Idiosyncrasies in eyesight will also play a part in this choice. If you have uneven eyesight don't forget to use the dioptre ring to adjust for differences (usually on the right-hand eyepiece). Eyeglass wearers will also have to look for a long eye relief (the distance between your eye and the ocular lens). Fold-down or adjustable eye cups will be needed to fine-tune this.

Durability. Binoculars are fragile instruments and no matter how much care you take they will still have to endure the occasional knocks and vibrations of rough track walking. Roof prism binoculars are more susceptible to damage and it is best to look for those with a thick, shock-absorbing rubber coating. Ideally, those with porro prisms should also have a good covering as their bulkiness may make them hard to stow away safely in a pack. Supplied binocular pouches are often woefully inadequate in construction and padding so it may be worth buying one made for professional use to protect your investment. I made my own dust-proof, water-resistant pouch out of Cordura nylon, Velcro and three millimetre foam as I couldn't find a suitable item in the shops.

Waterproofness. If you use binoculars in wet weather or alpine conditions you may have to consider a waterproof or water-resistant model. The best are filled with nitrogen gas to stop them fogging and also to keep out dust. There is nothing worse than pulling out the binoculars

Wild
Equipment
Survey

Lightweight binoculars

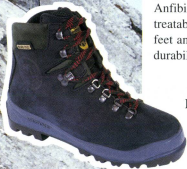
	Magnification objective lens diameter, millimetres	Exit pupil, millimetres	Weight, grams	Prism type	Optical quality	Stability for extended bushwalking	Comments	Approx price, \$
Bausch and Lomb Japan								
Compact	8 x 20	2.5	205	roof	●●●	●●	Non-slip coating	348
Brunton USA								
Eterna 4054w	8 x 24	3	380	roof	●●●●	●●●●	Waterproof, nitrogen-filled, rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	500
Bushmaster China								
8 x 21	8 x 21	2.6	230	roof	● 1/2	●●	Rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	90
Bushnell China								
Spectator	8 x 23	2.9	240	porro	●●	●●	Plastic covering, rubber grip on top	180
Canon Japan								
8 x 22A	8 x 22	2.8	300	roof	●●●	●● 1/2	Plastic covering. 10 x 25 available	310
8 x 23 AWP	8 x 23	2.9	400	porro	●●●	●●●●	Water-resistant, nitrogen-filled, rubber armoured	390
Minolta China/Japan								
Pocket 8 x 20EZ	8 x 20	2.5	220	roof	●●	●●	Rubber-armoured	250
Compact 8 x 23	8 x 23	2.9	240	porro	●●●	●●	Plastic covering. 10 x 23 available	280
Compact Weathermatic	8 x 23	2.9	500	porro	●●●	●●●	Water-resistant, nitrogen-filled, rubber-armoured. 10 x 23 available	500
Nikon Japan								
CF Sprint II Sportstar*	9 x 21	2.3	215	porro	●●	●●	Plastic covering. Other dimensions available	196
8 x 20DCF	8 x 20	2.5	210	roof	●●●	●●●	Rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	330
8 x 23CF WP/RA	8 x 23	2.9	425	porro	●●●●	●●●●	Waterproof, nitrogen-filled, rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	560
Pentax Japan								
UCFV	8 x 24	3	300	porro	●●	●●	Rubber-armoured. Higher magnifications available	170
UCFWR	8 x 24	3	300	porro	●●	●●●	Rubber-armoured, water-resistant. Higher magnifications available	190
DCF Mini	7 x 20	2.9	210	roof	●●	●●●	Rubber-armoured. 9 x 20 available	210
Steiner Germany								
Rocky*	8 x 24	3	250	roof	●●●●	●●●●	Water-resistant, nitrogen-filled, rubber-armoured. 10 x 28 and 12 x 28 available	430
Swarovski Austria								
Pocket	8 x 20	2.5	215	roof	●●●●	●●●●	Waterproof, nitrogen-filled, rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	849
Tasco China/Hong Kong								
16SRB	8 x 21	2.6	200	roof	● 1/2	●●	Rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	90
19ORB/CR*	7 x 25	3.6	250	porro	●●	●●	Rubber-armoured	100
Sonoma	8 x 21	2.6	200	roof	● 1/2	●●	Rubber-armoured. 10 x 25 available	100

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent * Not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer's name is the country in which the products are made



STEP INTO ANOTHER WORLD

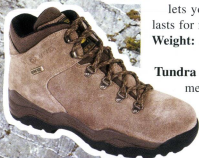
To go to the end of the earth, walk in a boot that has been there and back. The Trekking Line from La Sportiva can take you to a weekend getaway or a Himalayan basecamp. Choose Anfibio or Nabuck leather, Gore-Tex® booties or treatable outers. You'll find one boot to fit your feet and your needs. For a world of comfort and durability, step into La Sportiva.



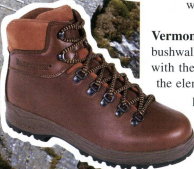
Pacific Crest • This boot bridges the gap between heavy duty backpacking and light mountaineering. Nabuck uppers and a cambrelle lining let the boot break in easily, yet last through many miles. The Vibram Calgary sole accepts a flexible crampon for snow and glacier crossings. A boot as versatile and rugged as the trail that inspired it. **Weight: 1800 gms per pair.**



Sherpa and Lady Sherpa • Extra leather reinforcement and padding give the Sherpa boots a solid feel over rocky terrain. The self-cleaning Vibram sole keeps you surefooted on any descent and a fully taped Gore-Tex bootie lets you walk through a monsoon. Separate lasts for men and women ensure the right fit. **Weight: 1450 gms per pair.**



Tundra • An exceptionally light-weight, medium height boot which provides excellent quality for an economical price. Ideal for day walking, travelling and moderate walking. The Gore-Tex liner makes the boot breathable and waterproof. **Weight: 1050 gms per pair.**



Vermont • For extended weekends and all round bushwalking, hike in confidence and comfort with the Vermont. Tanned Anfibio uppers keep the elements out. The Vibram® Rothorn sole provides air channel support and even flex. A Cambrelle lining adds padded comfort and an easy break in. It's a modern day classic. **Weight: 1400 gms per pair.**

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Jolly Swagman	Hobart	(03) 6234 3999
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Wilderness Equipment	Claremont	(09) 385 3711

Mount Scorpion, Western Arthur Range, Tasmania. Photo: Neil Bhindry

to find that they are clouded with moisture and completely unusable. Few manufacturers stick their necks out and claim that their binoculars are guaranteed to be waterproof but if the model you are considering is nitrogen-filled, you can be almost certain that it is completely sealed.

A good compromise is to go for a weather-resistant model; the more 'sealed up' they are, the less chance there is of water- or dust infiltration. From my own experience, cheap binoculars are dust attractors and internal cleaning is a job best left to experienced albeit expensive service staff. Bargain-priced binoculars that looked good in the shop will generally fail to cope with the rigours of extended bushwalking trips and use above the snowline. Paying extra for better optics and more solid construction is a worthwhile investment as a good pair of binoculars can last a lifetime.

Suitability. These ratings are based on usefulness and durability when the binoculars are taken on arduous, extended walks in poor weather or above the snowline. Robustness and water-resistance are most important. Some of the models with lower ratings may be very well suited to less taxing applications such as occasional use on overnight bushwalks.

TRIX

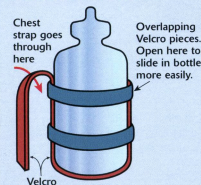
Water-bottle harness

How to have your water-bottle always at the ready, by Marlene Chesney

About six years ago we started bushwalking and soon realised that we weren't drinking enough water because we had to remove our packs to get out our water-bottles each time we wanted a drink.

My husband Chris designed a water-bottle harness using Velcro and 20 millimetre wide nylon tape, and I machined a couple up. The harness slides into the pack's chest strap, and we each carry two 750 millilitre Ultimate Sportsman water-bottles. Of course, you can make yours to fit your favourite water-bottle.

They have been very successful and thirst is no longer a problem!



Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

Price is highly variable and some models can be up to \$100 cheaper (or about \$60 dearer) than listed. Drive a hard bargain—there seems to be plenty of flexibility in how much these products sell for in the shops.

Scott Edwards

RUCKSACKS

● Macpac avalanche

Kiwi manufacturer Macpac adds a multitude of new rucksacks, travel-, day- and multisport packs to its extensive array of well-made outdoors gear. The new, women's fit *Momentum* (a day-and-a-half pack with a claimed capacity of 50 litres) is similar in basic design and construction to the 'older' (unisex) *Pursuit*, but also features an extendible lid (claimed to add an extra 10 litres)—suitable for a very lightweight overnight trip. Also new is the *Kakapo* (twin-compartment, 70–75 litre capacity) rucksack, a smaller version of its well-established cousin, the *Cascade*. The large 'cargo' back pocket on the *Kakapo* gives easy access to lunch and other essential items. RRP \$239 and \$399, respectively. The *Greenstone* and *Cruiser* day packs (both claimed to be 35 litres) feature an extra outside front pocket; the *Orb* is a smaller day pack with a 25 litre capacity—these may suit the budget-minded. The *Tui* (25 litres) is a more robust day pack with an outside panel that can be used to accommodate extra gear such as clothing with the aid of two compression-straps. It is made with AzTec material. RRP \$89, \$69.95, \$49.95 and \$79, respectively. The *Tuatara* is a tapered, 35 litre, technical day-pack which has two attachment points, reflective tape, side-pockets and a padded (removable) foam back. RRP \$169.

For a little more spring in your step—ideal for rogaining—two new multisport-type day packs offer lightweight performance on or off the competitive edge. The *Ultramarathon* and *Cyclone* (claimed to weigh 900 grams and 700 grams, respectively) appear to offer unrestrained body movement without the sometimes overbearing sway of a weighted day pack. This is achieved with the use of additional, ergonomically positioned compression-straps and elasticised side-pockets: as each day pack is strapped, it 'pulls' into one's body ensuring an optimum fit. The *Hydropod* is a water-carrier-type day pack ready to quench a well-earned thirst. RRP \$169, \$139 and \$99, respectively.

The best sun protection, especially for the little ones, is shade. Designed to attach to Macpac's 1997 Possum and Koala child carriers, the aptly named *Sombriero* (100 grams, made of nylon) combines a sunshade with a rain poncho (which covers the child carrier much like a pack cover for a conventional rucksack) for extra protection against the elements. RRP \$49.95.

Try boarding the new *Zambesi* travel pack to paddle down its mighty namesake in Africa—it features a fixed *Active* harness (women's fit available), detachable day pack

and side/base compression-straps. The *Zambesi* (2.4–2.5 kilograms, 70–75 litres) costs RRP \$429.

The *Firefly inner* (450 grams) is best described as an inner sheet filled with (130 grams of) down. Although it has no hood (like its relative, the *Snowflake*) you may even be able to use the *Firefly* as a sleeping-bag on its own—it also features a full zip. Finally, the *Lugganaut tote-type bag* will carry anything and everything—a whopping capacity of 130 litres will see to that. RRP \$179 and \$199, respectively. Macpac products are available from many outdoors shops.

TENTS

● Heavens above

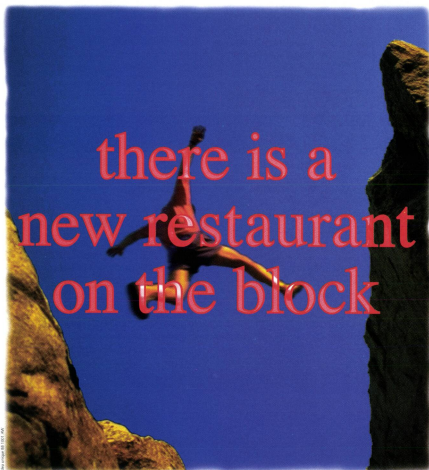
The clear night skies must have done it. Four new tents—the *Polaris*, *Apollo*, *Spectrum XPD* and *Eclipse* (actually a remake of an older model)—are now available from Macpac. The *Polaris* (with a claimed weight of 3.6 kilograms and with twin entrances and vestibules) grandly accommodates up to four people—surely an ultimate card-playing arena! The



Some like 'em big. Macpac's 'home away from home', the Spectrum XPD tent.

Apollo (claimed to be 2.9 kilograms in weight and also with twin entrances and vestibules) appears to offer exceptional room with a high inner and incorporated dome design—equal-length poles should make for easier pitching in the rain or during the night. One of the largest four-season tents to emerge on the Australian

This department describes new products which the editorial staff consider will be of interest to readers. The tests they applied for inclusion are whether a product is useful for the rucksack sports, and whether it is fundamentally new (or newly available in Australia). The reports are based on information provided by the manufacturer/distributor. As is the case with all editorial text appearing in *Wild*, publication of material in this department is in no way connected with advertising. Submissions for possible publication are accepted from advertisers and from businesses not advertising in *Wild*, as well as from our readers. (See also the footnote at the end of this department.)



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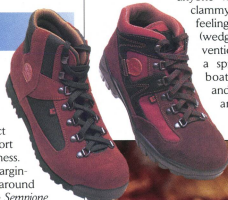
M O U N T A I N · S A F E T Y · R E S E A R C H

market for some time, the Spectrum XPD dome (weight 4.6 kilograms, twin entrances and vestibules) could well serve as a base-camp tent—judging by its spacious interior. The revamped, two-person Eclipse (claimed weight of 2.3 kilograms) has increased ventilation and usable storage area thanks to an altered vestibule design. Overall, Macpac has now categorised all its tents into two groups—the Zenith series and the Horizon series: the former groups together high performance tents (such as the Spectrum XPD) while the latter includes tents (such as the Apollo) that—while not possessing the more technical features of the Zenith series tents—still have, as claimed, quality and strength. Available at many outdoors shops, the tents retail for RRP \$649, \$499, \$1099 and \$399, respectively.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

These may B 4 U

Two models of attractive-looking boots from Italian manufacturer *Alu* recently landed at *Wild* for inspection. The *Trail* is likely to attract the walker who seeks comfort and increased waterproofness. A sleek-looking boot, it is marginally softer (in sole flex and around the heel) than its cousin, the *Sempione* (also new). In addition the *Trail* features a Gore-Tex lining and a relatively high rand (giving some respite from nasty rock gashes and scratches while in the bush). The Cambrille-lined *Sempione* has a slightly lower cut below (the tongue lining which joins the boot) and a stiffer sole. Both lightweight boots come equipped with Vibram soles and appear to be sturdy, suitable for both day- and overnight walks. RRP \$199, \$149, respectively. Available from *Snowgum* shops.

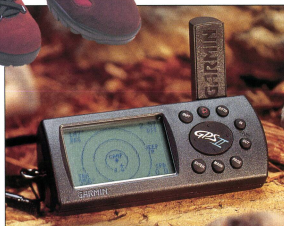


MISCELLANEOUS

All aboard!

What comes across clearly in US manufacturer *Ocean Kayaks*'s video catalogue of sit-on-top designs is how much fun you can have with an unconventional kayak. The Ocean Kayaks craft all have a distinctive appearance, with flared bows, odd-shaped sterns, channelled hulls and self-bailing ports in the multiposition foot-wells. Technical specifications seem good. Polyethylene is a proven material and most models have at least one hatch, with the longer boats apparently having plenty of storage space both by way of hatches and with recessed wells where gear can be securely strapped in. These would seem to be great

boats for beginners and for anyone who dislikes the clammy, claustrophobic feeling of being seated (wedged?) in a conventional kayak with a spray-deck. These boats seem stable and easy to paddle and bail themselves.



particular environment. On the other hand, these craft could in some ways be safer; on white water, for example, the dangers of most pin situations are all but eliminated by the ability simply to eject instantly.

The sit-on-tops range from the *Yahoo!*, a manoeuvrable, 3.2 metre, 20 kilogram, single-seat, river- and surf craft to the two-seater *Malibu Two*, a larger-volume, 3.9 metre, 28 kilogram exploration craft with space for gear storage. The *Frenzy* is a short 2.7 metre, 19 kilogram, surf- and white-water boat while the *Scrambler* is a 3.7 metre, 24 kilogram stable platform suitable for touring, fishing, or even diving with its built-in tank-well. The *Scupper Pro* is a 4.6 metre, 26 kilogram touring craft with space to stow camping gear.

The *Innova* inflatable boats look like fun, stable craft suitable for pottering or for use on easy white water and seem to pack into small bags. There are three models: the *Helios 380*, *Helios 340* and *Junior*. For more information about these innovative craft, contact the distributor, *Canoe Sports*, The Boatshed, 11 Narrabeen St, Narrabeen Lake, NSW 2010.

Guy Reeve

Pure power?

The Australian distributor of the Canadian *Pure Energy* reusable battery claims that this alkaline battery is about to revolutionise the reusable battery market. Made without poisonous mercury or cadmium and providing increases above the charge-time of Nicad rechargeables, the *Pure Energy* battery is said already to have captured half of the US rechargeable battery market. Every environmentally aware outdoors shopper should keep an eye out for reusable

batteries the next time his or her headtorch sputters out.

Putting more techno into weenie

Just when you thought you had seen it all... The global positioning system (GPS) navigator unit available from US manufacturer *Garmin*—the *GPS II*—weighs a claimed 255 grams (including its two AA operational batteries)—lightweight when compared to other GPS units available not so long ago (see *Equipment*, *Wild* no 51). The *GPS II* features an LCD screen display which is interchangeable between a vertical and a horizontal format for navigation. With a claimed battery life of up to 20 hours it also has a 250 user-waypoint capacity. Distributed by *GME Electrophone: Standard Communications*. RRP \$679



Top, new *Aku* walking boots: *Sempione*, left, and *Trail*. Middle, you can read the make and model yourself. At a claimed weight of 255 grams GPS units don't come much lighter. Bottom, the *Scrambler*, from *Ocean Kayaks*.

A disadvantage of these craft could be the potential for inexperienced people to get out of their depth very quickly, either on the sea or in a river. The longer learning curve to master the skills of paddling a conventional kayak also gives time to acquire knowledge of the hazards of a

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahara, Vic 3181.

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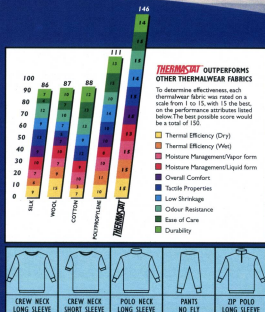
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Books on our best-loved places

Major new works on Mt Wellington and Wilsons Promontory

BOOKS

On the Mountain

by Peter Dombrovskis, Richard Flanagan and Jamie Kirkpatrick (West Wind Press, 1996, limited edition hard cover—sold out, RRP \$49.95 soft cover).

On first acquaintance Hobart's own mountain, Mt Wellington, is unlikely material to be considered 'wilderness'. In many ways, of course, it isn't. This book is a tribute to those qualities that are so well known to many Tasmanians but of which many others, including *Wild* readers in other States, may be less aware. However, Mt Wellington has great and varied attractions for bushwalkers of every ilk, not to mention rockclimbers and naturalists.

On the Mountain does more to convey the beauty and significance of Mt Wellington than any publication I've seen. It ought to. A truly all-star team has been assembled for the project. Dombrovskis is a legend in Australian landscape photography. A number of his photos have become icons and will live on for years after his sad, premature death last year. Flanagan, who wrote the essay on Mt Wellington and its importance (particularly for Tasmanians), is a skilled writer whose novel *Death of a River Guide* was highly acclaimed. Kirkpatrick, an eminent Tasmanian academic and environmentalist, describes the natural history of the mountain in a manner that informs without undue strain for unscientific types like us. And Dombrovskis's own publishing business, which has long been a byword for quality and is now headed by his widow, Liz Dombrovskis, handled production arrangements.

It's little wonder that this major work has already sold thousands of copies. May it continue to do so.

Chris Baxter

Wilsons Promontory: Coastal Wilderness

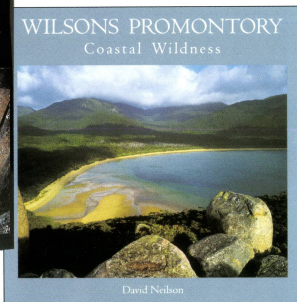
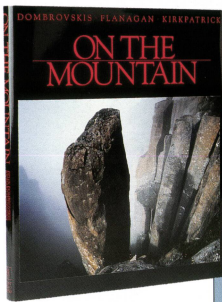
by David Neilson (Snowgum Press, 1996, RRP \$32.95 from bookshops or by mail

order ladd \$3.00 for postage and packaging) from Snowgum Press, PO Box 309, Emerald, Vic 3782).

Publication of this large-format, soft-covered book about one of Australia's most beautiful and best-loved wild places is timely. Large sections of the Victorian

'for all time', of Neilson's own relationship with it, and of the issues of the current dispute. The standards of design and production are outstanding. If you have friends who are 'not sure what all the fuss is about', or if you are in that position yourself, buy them and yourself a copy.

CB



public were up in arms over government proposals to allow the construction of not only an hotel [*That proposal has been scrapped—see Green Pages on page 23 of this issue.* Editor] but also a system of commercial huts in the National Park. And, surprisingly, there has not been a photographic book about 'the Prom' published for more than ten years.

Neilson is perfectly qualified for the job. He is the author and photographer of *South West Tasmania—A Land of the Wild*, a large-format book published some years before the first issue of *Wild*. He also produced the successful *ACF Wilderness Diary* from 1985 to 1995 and is renowned as a wilderness photographer for such remarkable photos as that used in his Lake Pedder poster reviewed in *Wild* no 59. He hasn't let us down with *Wilsons Promontory*. Sixty photos, most of them outstanding, eloquently testify to the grossest of the government's proposals while his 9000-word text is a well-crafted description of this unique place and the history of its being set aside

Walking and Touring in the Barrington Tops

by Barry Collier (Envirobook, 1995, RRP \$14.95).

When Barrington Tops is mentioned people usually react in one of two ways. Some say what a great place it is and that they like to get up there as often as possible. Others state that they've never been there but want to go because they've heard a lot about it. Barry Collier's book caters for both groups.

My Barrington Tops experiences began in the early 1960s but I eagerly purchased Collier's book hoping for a few new ideas. I was not disappointed. Instead of the usual guidebook megawalks, here was a series of short walks that allowed me to see Barrington in a new light. Collier encourages us to tread softly and to appreciate the micro-environment. He leads us along the beaten paths made by forestry- or National Parks personnel and

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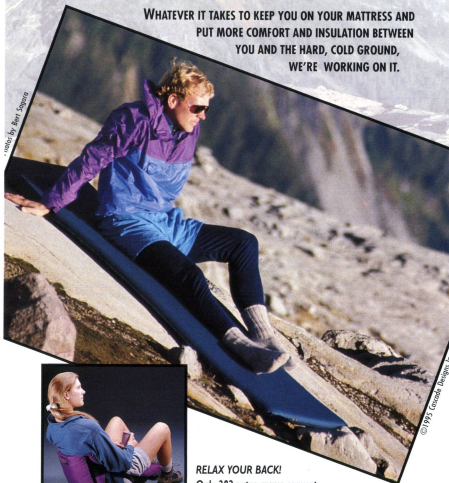
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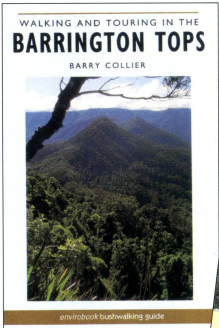
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points out the items of interest with the keen eye of the naturalist. How else would I have realised that the great bulk of the tree I was passing was really the two metre high root stock on an ancient beech? That the ground level was once two metres higher and had eroded and that this ancient root stock could have produced many trunks over thousands of years? All this and more is explained in the descriptions of the 40 short walks covered by the book.

Road access, car tours, picnic- and campsites are also described. Simple maps, black-and-white photos and an excellent chapter on flora complete the book's usefulness.

Barrington Tops is a unique and important part of NSW's Hunter Valley region. If you want to see it for the first time or to see it in a fresh light, don't go up there without Collier's book. I look forward to his next publication, in which he will describe the walks of NSW's Central Coast.

Greg Powell



● **Mountain Walks in the Stirling Range: A pictorial guide. Part 1 and Part 2**

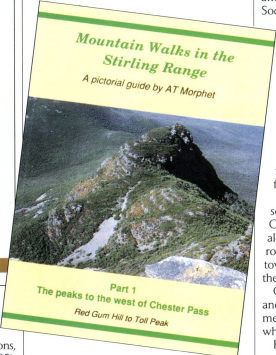
both by AT Morphet (Morridon Publications, 1996, Part 1 RRP \$13.95, Part 2 RRP \$14.95).

Seven years ago the classic bushwalk between Ellen Peak and Bluff Knoll (otherwise known as the Stirling Ridge Walk) in Western Australia's south-west had a real aura. There were epic stories of parties becoming lost amongst the impenetrable scrub amid steep, waterless terrain. My first traverse of this formidable yet spectacular country relied on 1:50 000 scale maps combined with information from the Lonely Planet bushwalking guide (which only described the shorter 'Half Ridge' circuit walk) and track notes from Perth outdoors retailers. Many false leads off the ill-defined tracks could have been avoided had a decent guidebook existed.

Now, two pictorial guides, *Mountain Walks in the Stirling Range* by AT Morphet, cover the entire Stirling Range in vivid

detail. The guides describe the western and eastern parts of the range. They are manageable in size (176 x 130 millimetres) and weight for carrying in a pack. *Part 1* deals with the peaks west of Chester Pass including popular mountains such as Toolbrunup Peak, Mt Hassel and Talyuberlup Peak. *Part 2* covers the peaks east of Chester Pass (it is a pity that the front-cover title incorrectly refers to peaks west of the pass—for which the author apologises) including Bluff Knoll and describes the Stirling Ridge Walk peak by peak allowing for easy reference when walking in either direction.

The author has climbed most of the 34 named peaks from every direction and has produced a series of invaluable route-finding sketches including summit-view pictures to help to identify features. The accompanying track notes complement the pictures and would be particularly useful when walking in low cloud or mist (common on the high peaks). Included in the guides is information on when to visit, useful maps, equipment (I would add gardening gloves to the list!) times and durations of



walks, camping areas, water sources and notes on special conservation areas. Not only do these superb guides reduce the uncertainty of walking in the Stirling Range, they enhance its charm without giving away too much of the mystery.

The only deficiency of the guides is the lack of a general location map at the beginning of *Part 1* which, for people unfamiliar with the region, could illustrate the entire range in the context of surrounding country.

David Wagland

● **Havens of the High Country**

by David Oldfield (The Black and White Enthusiast, 1996, RRP \$24.95).

David Oldfield is a John Sisemanesque poem who, like his better-known country-

man, emigrated to Australia in the 1960s, fell in love with our High Country and produces books about it which both enlighten and inspire us. But while Siseman is well known for his meticulous guidebooks, Oldfield is an outstanding photographer—a different sort of photographer. Oldfield is a master of the dying art of black-and-white photography.

Havens of the High Country is a slim, A4 publication of 64 black-and-white photos and the briefest introduction. The photos are all taken in Victoria and all but a handful are of mountain huts. Many of the photos depict the huts' interiors. The standard of photography and its reproduction is outstanding. This little book is a work of art and will have great appeal to anyone with an interest in Victoria's High Country and particularly its huts, which Oldfield has sought to document in this way before they, too, go the way of so many historic huts no longer extant.

CB

● **Explore the Flinders Ranges**

edited by Sue Barker, Murray McCaskill and Brian Ward (Royal Geographical Society of South Australia, 1996, RRP \$29.95 or by mail-order from the RGSSA (postage and packaging extra \$4.50 for up to five copies)).

This book is a great overview of the ranges with snippets from just about every topic you could imagine. Discovery, exploration, settlement, geology, flora, fauna, native people, touring and walking—all get a mention. The book is attractive and well presented, like a good smorgasbord—you feel you want to dip in here and there for the most appealing bits.

Half of the 200 pages cover the first seven of the topics already mentioned. One quarter is dedicated to car tours along the major highways and lesser roads. The remainder is divided between town walks and bushwalks. Unfortunately, there is no useful information on camping. Quality maps, scattered colour photos and historical black-and-whites complement the well-written text. Taken as a whole, the book is brilliant.

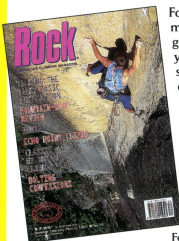
However, the 'smorgasbord' approach comes at a cost. *Explore the Flinders Ranges* is difficult to use as a guidebook. For example, information on things to see and do in one area may be scattered through separate sections on highways, byways, town walks, bushwalks, 'discovery boxes' or the gazetteer. And with only 12 walks spread over the 60 000 square kilometres of the Flinders, it is not a walker's book. The routes are generally confined to easy tracks in the foothill country and all are of one day's duration or less. However, the track notes are clearly presented and are pitched at the educational level. They would be an excellent resource for students and for families wanting to learn more about the local geology and flora.

Each walk has been specially marked out on the ground by volunteers using stakes and posts. Although there is a case

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for this kind of practice in some areas I would not like to see it proliferate.

With this book you can 'explore' as much from your armchair as on an actual visit. There is a place for it on the shelf of anyone with an interest in the Flinders Ranges.

Grant Da Costa

● Indian Himalaya

by Michelle Coxall and Paul Greenway (Lonely Planet, 1996, RRP \$24.95).

This very recent example of a Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit (not to be confused with the Lonely Planet *Trekking in the Indian Himalaya*) amply demonstrates the high art form which Lonely Planet guides have now achieved. Crammed into 464 pages, still portable enough to fit into the day pack front pocket and to handle with ease, Lonely Planet's *Indian Himalaya* is a veritable mine of information.

Particularly user-friendly are the new, tabbed sections on the page edges for each subregion and the individual headings on each page—both allow quick reference to specific information. The use of boxed inserts within the text of these guides has been increased to highlight much valuable information (such as the key Hindu and Buddhist principles, festivals and deities) and some that is esoteric; for example, how to make Tibetan momos and the distinguishing features of Indian motor bikes! I found the inserts on Mt Everest and the yeti a little curious, as if they had slipped in from the Nepal guide. I liked the boxed treks in the regional sections but it is advisable to take a companion trekking book along to accumulate all the critical detail required to undertake the trek you select.

Although the price of Lonely Planet guides is going up the cost could be considered an economy—with such a wealth of detail in the 'facts about the region' and 'for the visitor' sections alone there is probably no need to take any other general reading material for one's journey.

At times the extent of detail is a little arbitrary. The geology section, for example, is rather cursory compared to the climate section with its regional rainfall and temperature charts and the necessary list of monsoon wet-weather gear. It was pleasing to find a clear emphasis on environmental conservation and on issues of responsible tourism.

I look forward to taking this guide on my next journey into the region. I anticipate that many tourists will be in my secret haunts now that this book has documented them so well! And I must remember to pack a magnifying glass to appreciate the comprehensive detail of the maps.

Judy Parker

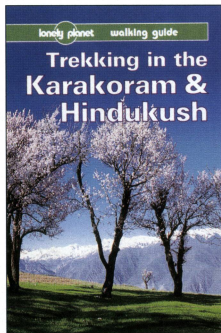
● Trekking in the Karakoram & Hindu Kush

by John Mock and Kimberley O'Neill (Lonely Planet, 1996, RRP \$22.95).

Having often trekked solo in the secluded and spectacular territory of northern Pakistan, no central Asian trekking guidebook could interest me more deeply. This

Lonely Planet Walking Guide does not disappoint. It is pocket sized and, as with most Lonely Planet guides, the extent of its detail is quite remarkable.

I appreciated the many characteristic Lonely Planet guidebook conventions such as extremely logical segmentation of the book, tabbed page edges for regional sections, informative glossary of specific terminology and bold type in the index for the key reference page. The inserts on the peaks with their first ascents, the excellent overview of the trekking 'standards' and



the potted history of exploration in the introductory, information-giving chapters were splendid summaries. In particular I found the porter hire, local language essential vocabulary, book list and selecting your trekking 'shalwar kameez' (!) sections highly informative.

But I was disappointed that the book did not include more of the tempting inserts of colour photographs or of the highlighted box sections which I have come to expect. The small 'highlight' sections at the start of each regional section do not do justice to the unique delights of the areas. I was also disappointed in the superficial paragraphs in the geography section—for which so much interesting detail could have been summarised from existing texts to make fascinating reading for the cold, long evenings in the tent. The maps, remarkable for their precision, are—alas—visually difficult to peruse, especially without a key.

However, the comprehensive trek sections for each region are excellent. The care with which the day-by-day route descriptions have been written, and the very valuable porter-stage and map-note information prefacing each major route description give the book its true merit.

JP

● Kids Outdoors

by Victoria Logue, Frank Logue and Mark Carroll (McGraw-Hill, 1996, RRP \$26.95).

● The Dayhiker's Handbook

by John Long and Michael Hodgson (McGraw-Hill, 1996, RRP \$26.95).

● Simple Tent Camping

by Zora and David Aiken (McGraw-Hill, 1996, RRP \$26.95).

Although written by adults *Kids Outdoors* has been put together in collaboration with, and with input from, young teenagers. The end result is a how-to book designed specifically for kids between 11 and 15 years of age. The information presented is easy to understand and covers just about everything a kid (and his or her parents for that matter) would need to know before heading into the outdoors for the first time.

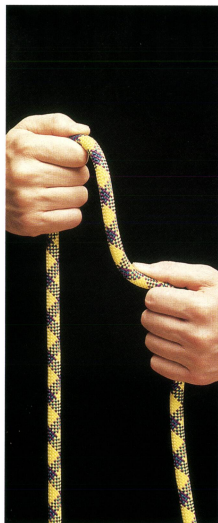
The Dayhiker's Handbook is generally meant for novice walkers but there is still enough new material here to guarantee that even the oldest dog will pick up a few new tricks. Michael Hodgson has put together an easy-to-read guide bursting at the seams with facts and tips. The information is presented in a refreshing way and is further complemented by numerous, excellent line drawings and black-and-white photographs. John Long's experimental essays and anecdotes combine flawlessly with Hodgson's explanations and give the reader much more than just another how-to book. For all you cyber-junkies there is even a selected listing of some of the better North American outdoors web sites.

In just over 200 pages, *Simple Tent Camping* escorts the reader through 'everything you always wanted to know about camping out but were afraid to ask'. You'll find plenty of material on preparing food, building camp-fires, types of stoves, choosing a sleeping-bag—and much more. There is even a list of the author's favourite recipes. The main drawback (for many *Wild* readers) is that *Simple Tent Camping* targets those who wish to camp next to the car at prepared camp-sites. Fortunately, those with the rather more romantic notion of camping well away from petrol fumes will still find much of value in this book. Many of the same subjects overlap in all three books.

My biggest criticism, however, is that each of these books is unashamedly North American in content and concept. But this is no fault of the authors, who obviously had no intention of writing for an international readership. As it is, we learn to identify black-bear, chipmunk and porcupine tracks, to know a rattlesnake when we see one and we get to know each of the Northern hemisphere star constellations. You will also need to brush up on your imperial weights and measures since the Americans have not adopted the metric system. Chapters such as Weather Forecasting Signs in *Kids Outdoors* are simply not indicative of typical Australian weather conditions. And so it goes on. Irrelevant material aside, there is still a great deal of worthy information to be gleaned from each of these books. In the end, however, it is *The Dayhiker's Handbook* which will be most satisfying, and most relevant, to Australian readers.

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● In-Line Skating Made Easy

by Martin Dugard (Globe Pequot Press, 1996, RRP \$16.95).

It all started in Minneapolis when in the early 1980s when two brothers combined old-fashioned roller-skates with modern technology and design. The result was in-line skating, a sport which quickly captured the imagination of hundreds of thousands of people across both genders and all ages. This book will be of particular interest to many *Wild* readers because in-line skating is an important off-season, cross-country-skiing training tool. To simulate your skating skis is as easy as combining your in-line skates with a pair of rubber-tipped ski poles. *In-Line Skating Made Easy* is a surprisingly refreshing read as it carries you through basic and advanced techniques, safety and equipment. There are plenty of excellent drawings and enough photographs to whet your appetite.

GT

VIDEOS

● Manifestations: A year in the life of the Tarkine

(produced by and available from Kaganovich Productions, PO Box 83, Paddington, NSW 2021, 1996, RRP \$25).

One cannot doubt the intrinsic value of the Tarkine area. That the Tasmanian Government recently saw fit to bulldoze a road through the heart of what is the largest temperate rainforest wilderness in Australia defies logic. The Heemskirk Road is now an open wound, an environmental disaster; a muddy testimony to the triumph of the short-term greed of the few over the long-term need of the many. *Manifestations: A year in the life of the Tarkine* takes the viewer through the dramatic confrontations between protesters and the Tasmanian Government and the wood-chip moguls. It is clearly a David and Goliath situation and there is much to admire in those who took the battle to the front line.

In the end, however, *Manifestations* makes the mistake of preaching to the converted and fails to explain to the viewer who is unfamiliar with the Tarkine exactly why the area is worth fighting for. This is a great shame since any future protection of this valuable wilderness region can only become a reality when more people come to understand what it is that makes the Tarkine unique. Perhaps some form of narration would have helped. On a technical level the video is rough around the edges and would have benefited from tighter editing. If you can forgive its imperfections *Manifestations: A year in the life of the Tarkine* is a valuable record of protesters battling against the odds. But surely the Tarkine deserves much more.

GT

● Tasmania's Shy Albatross

by Jeff Jennings (Maatsuyker Video Productions, 1996, RRP \$34.95).

Members of the Maatsuyker Canoe Club are game if nothing else. Albatross Island to which they paddled is a long way from mainland Tasmania across potentially dan-

gerous waters. Jeff Jennings has evidently made the trip twice, this home video being a compilation of tapes from two overnight visits. Professional wildlife documentaries are usually the result of many months of filming with some of the best shots being stage-managed back in the studio. About one minute in each hour of footage is kept and the sparse, carefully crafted text is subtly interwoven with music that matches both the rhythm and the mood of the subject. This video makes one appreciate the skills of those who make such films, and why the cutting and editing must be ruthless if the result is to be watchable.

Stephen Garnett

MUSIC

● Images of Australia: Music and Photography

by Robert Rankin (Rankin Publishers, 1996, RRP \$24.95).

● Wanoom

by Boola Boola (for more information, phone 10511 74 5680, RRP \$29.95).

It is great to see our magnificent wild places inspiring a response in music. Here are two quite different offerings.

Robert Rankin is already well known as a wilderness photographer. His music, using sound recordings and synthesiser, is in quiet, reflective mood and gives a restful ambience. Tracks are inspired by particular wild places—Kata Tjuta, Mt Bogong, Hinchinbrook Island, Lake Pedder and Mt Barney; and Rankin's fine pictures of these places accompany the CD.

Boola Boola is a folk group, and their latest CD *Wanoom* uses the Bratualang name for Wilsons Promontory. The music is diverse, with Celtic and bluegrass influences as well as jigs and reels which should have your toes tappin'. The title track is richly evocative of the Prom, a special place to many Victorians. The album is timely, with the current controversy over plans to build a large hotel in the National Park (now scrapped), widen the roads and put in a series of huts for paying, guided tours.

Brian Walters

MAPS

● Australian Alps Walking Track: Walhalla to Canberra Map Guide

(Australian Alps Liaison Committee, 1996, RRP \$4.00).

This thin, A4-sized and attractive-looking book will come to the rescue of walkers bewildered with the location of some parts of the Australian Alps Walking Track as it traverses the magnificent ranges from Walhalla in Gippsland, Victoria, to Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory. I say this in the light of my own 'interesting' experiences with the AAWT (formerly known as the Alpine Walking Track) where our walking group tackled the occasional navigational twist and turn due to navigating from maps which—at that stage—did not indicate the track at all; indeed, the

AAWT is often an 'off-track' route. It is hoped that the 16 general colour maps (ranging in scale between 1:75 000 and 1:150 000—not suitable for navigation) will offer guidance to any walker (or skitourer) wishing to visit the many attractive peaks, plains and rivers of the Australian Alps. General track notes are also supplied for the areas between the Mitta Mitta River and Cowombat Flat (in Victoria), around the Murrumbidgee River (in New South Wales) and around Cotter Gap and Booroomba Rocks in the Australian Capital Territory. Be it for walking one or more stages of the track, or for walking it in one 'hit', this small publication is an invaluable reference.

Stephen Curtain

POSTERS AND CARDS

● Penguins of the Antarctic

poster by Jonathan Chester (Celestial Arts, 1995, RRP \$17.95).

● Penguins of the World

poster by Jonathan Chester (Celestial Arts, 1995, RRP \$17.95).



● Penguins

postcard book by Jonathan Chester (Celestial Arts, 1996, RRP \$16.95).

You've read the book (see the review of Chester's *Penguins: Birds of Distinction* in *Wild* no 63). Now look at the posters and send the postcards.

The 23 postcards include many outstanding photos of these endearing creatures. Whether you can bring yourself to tear out the cards and mail them is another matter. The posters feature more outstanding penguin pictures as well as information. ●

CB

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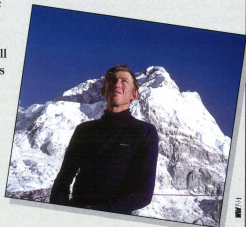
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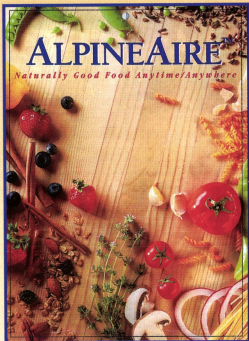
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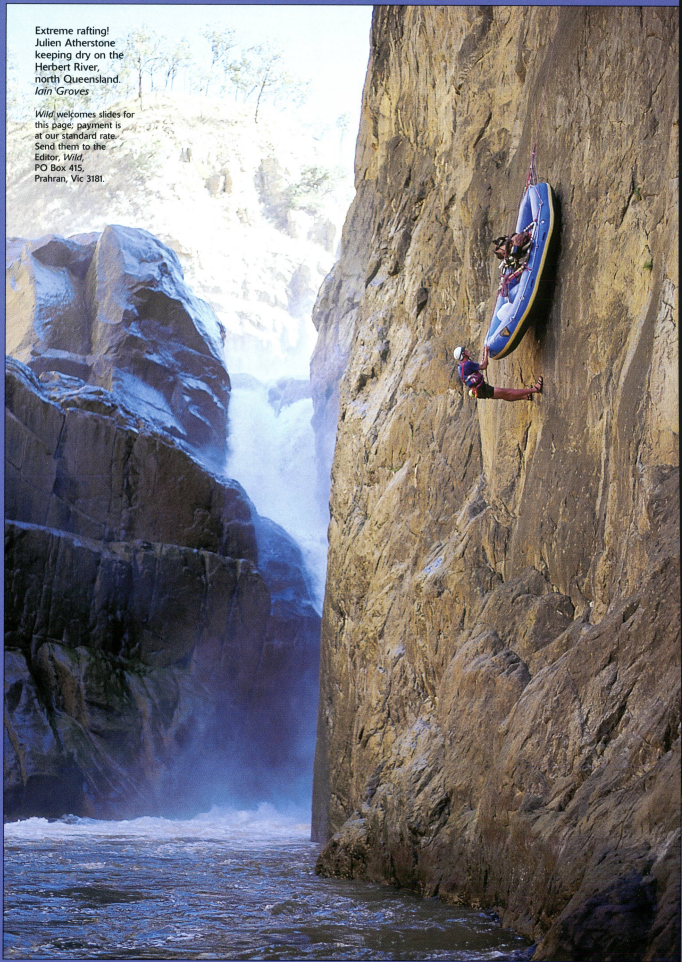
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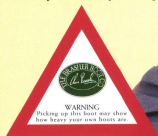
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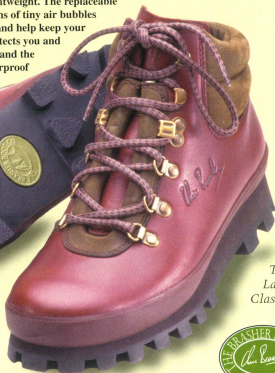
The Hillmaster GTX and Lady GTX feature Gore-Tex® Top Dry breathable yet waterproof membrane.



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The
Lady
Classic



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- World-wide protection.
- Includes bottle adaptor.
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- 3-year guarantee.



- Removes protozoa (including *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia*), bacteria.
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'MY JACKET'

I've worn my Snowgum fleece jacket on the roof for the last five years. It's lightweight, warm and doesn't hold moisture, that's important if you're a plumber. The views are always different, but my favourite is from Bennis's Spur over looking the Avon Wilderness. Roof plumbing's my trade, bushwalking my passion, the Grampians, Dargo High Plains, Wilson's Prom, when you're out there, you're alive. Five years isn't a long time for a Snowgum fleece, but hey, I'm a fashionable guy.

Mark Hitchens

Mark Hitchens

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Snowgum fleece is made from Polartec®, the world's best. Most of the fabrics in the Polartec range are now made from recycled PET bottles, which means by purchasing a Snowgum fleece jacket you are making a contribution to eliminating the waste that enters landfill.

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